



# Brave New Workers in a Brave New Workplace

*Are your job descriptions limiting your organization's potential? It may be time to rethink them.*

BY BRUCE GLASRUD

If your organization is like most nonprofits, you've had the same job descriptions for decades. But if you're on the cutting edge, you know that jobs must keep up with the shifting environment.

## Time to Change Job Titles?

It may be time to add some new jobs. No matter how small your organization, you can incorporate these new functions. What counts is the way of thinking demonstrated, not the size of the office. Here's a starter-set of new job titles and descriptions for you to think over:

**Intelligence Director.** If that sounds like government-speak from a

spy agency, you haven't been reading *Nonprofit World* closely enough. If you've followed this column, you know that organizational intelligence—both internal and external—is your optimum survival tool. As your organization's leader, your most important job is to gather competitive intelligence, help your staff make sense of it, and apply it to serve your mission. Already you probably notice you're managing people less and information more. Beat the crowd! Impress your board! Change your title now from executive director to intelligence director.

**Missionary-in-Chief.** No, don't pass the collection plate. Not that kind of missionary. This person's job is to be sure every step the organization takes is consistent with its mission. What they "preach" is benchmarking every program and service against the mission, thus preventing "mission creep" into marginal activities. The missionary-in-chief also measures the mission against the winds of community change to make sure you're still providing a viable and useful service.

**Resident Skeptic.** Dedicated board and staff members are a nonprofit's biggest strength. Yet these same people can be the organization's Achilles heel. So much passion

wrapped up in serving the organization can get in the way of sound judgment. With nobody to say, "The Emperor has no clothes," organizations can wander into ill-advised ventures. Like the court fool of medieval times, the resident skeptic must be accorded the status of "protected class." There is no merit to be gained in shooting the messenger.

### **Intangible Asset Appraiser.**

Do you know how much clout, community standing, and "market share" you have in the community? Are you fully using the knowledge and skill available through your staff and board? Your intangible asset appraiser can answer these questions by auditing your external and internal worlds. A periodical survey of the community assures that you don't have a grandiose view of your organization. Intermittent internal audits identify any unused staff and board talents. Knowing squarely where you stand is critical to delivering services and attracting funding.

### **Burnout Prevention Specialist.**

Have you ever heard of dedicated people burning out in the nonprofit sector? Nah, that never happens! Right. What nonprofits need is an

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organizational cheerleader or, to use a military term, a morale officer. This person continually takes the pulse of staff morale and works with the executive director and board to resolve issues contributing to burnout. Woe to those organizations so focused on the welfare of others that they neglect the welfare of their own staff. Nah, that never happens! Yeah, right.

**The Coordinator of Cool.** We nonprofits provide very cool programs and services to our community. We're often not so cool about showing the community just how cool we are. We're usually staffed by "ah shucks, it weren't nothing" people who eschew doing anything "too showy." As a result, we play second fiddle to the corporate and government sectors in terms of attracting

capable employees. It's time to replace the PR function with a coordinator of cool—someone to create images of esprit de corps, charm, hipness, and allure about what we do—and, just as important, the people who do it. If we can portray a picture of nonprofit altruism combined with the charisma of our workforce, we'll be a bigger magnet for competent people and adequate funding.

**Creatologist.** This is the staff member you lock in a room full of silly toys and funky music with the injunction to "banish our stale thinking, revitalize our arthritic programs, and make us fresh and vital once more." Then you leave this staff person alone to stand on their head and stack marbles or whatever. Creatologists do stuff like that to get the "vision thing" going. A good cre-

atologist will also sound out your intangible asset appraiser, resident skeptic, and missionary-in-chief, then come to you with the neatest new ideas your organization has ever seen. Be sure to give these creative people the admiration they deserve, or they may leave in disgust, realizing you didn't really want any new ideas in the first place.

**The Whoops-Now-What Coordinator.** It's not enough to prefigure change. You must also respond to change quickly. In times of rapid change, the *raison d'être* for your mission could disappear overnight. Another mission need could land in your lap the next morning. Stuff happens. You need a staff member who intimately knows the organization's capabilities and how to harness them. When change overtakes the



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organization, this person springs into action to advise the intelligence director on whether to raise the flag and yell charge or to fold the tent and go home. This staff member also guides and facilitates whatever change is necessary, leaving the intelligence director free to gather resources to support the change. Old-fashioned, 20th-century executive directors used to get sidetracked into managing rather than leading their organizations through change. The advent of this new job changes even that.

**Director of Bringing in Different People.** This position used to be titled “director of human resources.” In practice, it could have been titled “director of bringing in the same people.” The reward once was on filling jobs with people just like everyone else in the organization. These days, it’s imperative for a variety of skills and attitudes to be represented. This new job position makes it clear that organizational

homogeneity is old-school and is so over with.

**A New Nonprofit World?**

No, you probably won’t maintain staff with these tongue-out-of-cheek job titles. It wouldn’t hurt to loosen things up, though. Put some liveliness and humanity back into the jobs you’ve copied from the corporate sector!

If you get too creative with your job titles, will corporations and funders look askance? You may be surprised. Check out the hot new businesses at the leading edge, and you’ll find they’ve been creating jobs and job titles very similar to those proposed here.

What’s important isn’t creating new jobs but reconfiguring existing jobs. Imbed the qualities of the job titles described here, and you’ll achieve a new vibrancy for your organization. You’ll create a new set

of drivers for the brave new world of work. And you’ll encourage a new mindset on the way to our brave new world of nonprofits. ■

**Selected References**

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 Glasrud, Bruce, “The Future Just Walked in Your Door—Or Out of It,” *Nonprofit World*, July-August 2000.

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