

Six Steps to Outstanding Results

Don't strive to be "lean and mean." Strive, instead, to be "lean and friendly." Here are the steps that will produce results.

BY MERRILL DOUGLASS

Peter Drucker once wrote that "so much of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to work." Many nonprofit organizations, as they begin downsizing and reorganizing their operations, are discovering how true that statement is. With enough people, the work gets done, no matter how inefficiently. These days, though, management levels are disappearing, and staffs are growing leaner. That means you must make a conscious, careful effort to manage the workflow. You must make it *easy* for your good people to do good work.

Here are six steps to help you manage smarter and improve results.

Step 1 Be Sure Everyone Knows What to Do.

Focus all resources on critical issues. Spend even more time clarifying goals and priorities. Be sure policies and procedures are clearly written down so that everyone knows what will happen at each step along the way and what the final outcome should look like. Lean organizations can't afford to wander aimlessly.

Step 2 Examine All Rules.

Many rules grow from management paranoia, excessive ego, and turf-building. Drop all rules that hamper better performance. Commit the remaining rules to writing, and be sure they are accessible to everyone.

Step 3 Analyze All Procedures.

Almost any process can be improved. Act boldly. Cut out any unnecessary steps. Delegate authority to lower levels to speed up decisions. Stop redundant cross-checking and multiple authorizations. One organization shortened a key process from 120 days to four days simply by bypassing several layers of management.

Step 4 Eliminate Duplication.

Analyze all forms and reports. You'll probably find that many are redundant. Half the files in most organizations are duplica-

tions. Different departments may be keeping similar records. Question whether you really need every piece of information.

Step 5 Simplify the Work.

Strive for fewer stages, fewer tasks, fewer rules, less movement, faster responses. Identify bottlenecks, and remove them. Ask people doing the work for ideas on streamlining the process.

Step 6 Improve Supplier Relationships.

We sometimes forget how important suppliers are in the overall delivery of nonprofit services. All supplies—including those that are donated—should meet specific requirements. Substandard materials can be devastating to your organization's reputation—and to the clients you serve. Take care not only to regulate supplier standards but to nurture harmonious relationships with suppliers so that delivery goes smoothly.

For these six steps to work, you will need to communicate skillfully and continually with everyone in your organization and keep them up to date on what is happening. Getting work done requires working as a team. The smaller your organization, the truer this is.

Don't strive to be "lean and mean." Strive, instead, to be "lean and friendly." That's the best way to produce results. ■

Resources

"Beyond the Quick Fix: Creating a Vision for the Long Term," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 9, No. 1.

"Build a Powerful Staff Team," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 18, No. 4.

Lauer, Larry, "How to Improve Internal Communications," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 12, No. 3.

Management in Nonprofit World CD-ROM.

These publications are available through the Society's Resource Center, www.snpo.org.

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