

Find Your Truths and Release Your Powerful Energy

By David Casullo

Use these exercises to create a high-energy organization.

Why would a nonprofit organization want to repel a client or donor? Believe it or not, there are many legitimate and important reasons.

One story that offers insight comes from the early years of McDonald's. The McDonald brothers, Maurice and Richard, were doing quite well with a traditional drive-in restaurant model. As a carhop drive-in, a store could handle 125 cars at a time, and the menu was relatively broad, including ribs, beef sandwiches, and hamburgers.

Yet the brothers weren't happy with the status quo. It didn't resonate with their personal truths about who they were and what they wanted their restaurant to be. They saw an opportunity to be more streamlined and efficient, and they envisioned their brand as a simple, clean restaurant that provided good value for families.

However, this meant saying no to some easy money. They eliminated various revenue generators that weren't consistent with their vision for their business — jukeboxes, cigarette machines, pay phones, newsstands, and carhops (they

determined that the carhops were unreliable employees and tended to attract leather-jacketed teenagers — not the family crowd they were looking for).

This line of thinking seemed counterintuitive to pennywise restaurant owners of the 1950s. However, looking back, it's foundational to the fact that McDonald's is now the fourth most recognized global brand. No matter where you go in the world today the McDonald's brand is consistent.

What's the lesson for you as a leader in your organization? When you define, clarify, and courageously act on your own personal truths, you become energized. Even more, when you focus and broadcast this energy via clear and consistent behaviors and communication, you enhance the energy of everyone around you.

“What comes to mind when people think about your organization?”

“If a leader's truths don't line up with those of the organization, the energy can be destructive.”

Most important, this energy has the potential to create enormous value for your organization. Donors who share the same truths are more

powerfully attracted to you and your cause. They're moved to action — whether it's donating their money or their time — because they feel the power of your convictions.

It's the same with the organization's truths. When the people in and around your organization are clear on your organization's central truths, and you define these truths in a way that touches their hearts and minds, enormous energy transfer can occur, and people find themselves self-motivated to act in ways that drive results.

How do you tap this powerful principle? One key is to "slow down to speed up." Spend some time reflecting on your own truths and researching your organization's truths. Here are the steps to take:

- **Query as many people as possible**, both inside and outside your organization. Ask them what comes to mind when they consider you and your organization.
- **After observing, listening, and clarifying what you've learned, it's time to pinpoint** your organization's truths. Use "Exercise 1: Uncover Your Organization's Core Truths" (page 14) to help you do so.
- **Use the same exercise** to find your personal truths.
- **When you have a list of truths for yourself and your organization, analyze** the two. Ask yourself:
 - *Are the two truths* aligned?
 - *Do they complement* one another?
 - *Or do you need to make some changes in your organization's culture* so it harmonizes with your deepest beliefs?

“Communicating your truths can be exciting, scary, and even controversial.”

Building on Your Truths

For more on shaping a high-energy culture, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org/members:

How to Use Your Organizational Culture as a Competitive Tool (Vol. 20, No. 2)

Creating a Values-Based Road Map (Vol. 23, No. 2)

Grounded Visioning: A Quick Way to Create Shared Visions (Vol. 26, No. 4)

The Nonprofit Branding Exercise (Vol 26, No. 1)

Organizational Culture: It's in the Walk, Not Just the Talk (Vol. 29, No. 6)



EXECUTIVE EDUCATION
WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



CENTER FOR
NONPROFITS
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Present

19th Annual Fundraising and Development for Nonprofits Conference

Fluno Center for Executive Education, Madison, WI May 29-31, 2013



With generous support from American Family Insurance and the Alliant Energy Foundation



Comprised of an optional pre-conference grant writing workshop, as well as daily plenary sessions and 19 interactive breakout sessions covering the latest trending topics important to the nonprofit world, this intimate gathering of likeminded professionals has become one of the premier conferences for nonprofits in the Midwest.

Over its 18 year run, more than 98 percent of attendees rate the conference "excellent" or "very good." And 99 percent say it either matched or exceeded their expectations and that they would recommend the conference to others.

Join us and see for yourself!

For more information visit:

<http://exed.wisc.edu/conferences-summits/fundraising-and-development-for-nonprofits>

Exercises to Enhance Your Organization's Culture

To shape a culture that inspires and motivates, you need to know what makes your organization special. Here are two exercises to get you started:

Exercise 1: Uncover Your Organization's Core Truths

- **Block out a time when you can be alone and undisturbed.** Have a pen and paper nearby.
- **Close your eyes and think about your organization.** Picture its atmosphere and the energy around it. Consider the legends, the folklore, and the people within your organization who represent it best.
- **Think about what really matters.** Seek the deeper meaning behind the words people use when they talk about your organization.
- **Jot down whatever comes to mind.** Look for patterns. It will be like assembling a puzzle whose image begins to emerge as the pieces fit together.
- **Put those ideas together into three to five words or phrases that define your organization's core truths.** Don't overthink it! Let the truths emerge. As you contemplate the big picture and reflect on your organization's fundamental truths, they will become clear.

It's like an optical illusion: The harder you focus, the more elusive the image buried within becomes. The more you step back, squint, generalize, and let the details disappear into the all-encompassing pattern, the easier it will be to see the truths that shape your organization and form its style, purpose, and meaning.

Exercise 2: Crack the Code to Your Secret Sauce

When it comes to the high energy culture, your "secret sauce" is the atmosphere. Why do people love to work there? What's the secret ingredient? Storytelling is an excellent tool to help you pinpoint and communicate the elements of your secret sauce.

- **Think of a story that captures the atmosphere of your organization today.** It could be anything: a success, challenge, problem, or obstacle. Pick a story that captures what it feels like to work at your organization. Or, perhaps, think of a story that represents the best of your organization, a time when someone acted above and beyond the call of duty.
- **Now consider the story's lesson.** What insight does the story give about your organization's culture?
 - **If the insight is positive, use it to craft a definition** of your organization's "special sauce."
 - **If the insight is negative, write a statement** pinpointing the missing ingredient.
 - **If the insight is mixed, use it to create an explanation** of how you might tweak the recipe to give the sauce the magic it needs.

— adapted from exercises at the end of Chapters 2 and 4 in *Leading the High Energy Culture*

Beware! If a leader's truths don't line up with those of the organization, the energy can be dampened or even destructive. It's like an orchestra, where one instrument out of tune or out of sync can diminish or destroy the pleasing effect of the whole.

When truths are aligned, you'll have an atmosphere that can handle any amount of energy you create through your words, actions, and behaviors. Even more, the atmosphere will be capable of transferring the energy created by anyone in and around your organization to all others. The system will be fully capable of leveraging this power to an unlimited magnitude.

If you find discrepancies between your truths and those of your organization, you may need to make some changes. These are sometimes difficult changes. You'll need to communicate the reasons for these changes — the why — through a well-organized and powerfully executed campaign, as the McDonald brothers did. Doing so can be exciting, scary, and even controversial. But it can make all the difference.

Don't be afraid to embrace the risks of change. Nothing energizes like a great vision, powerfully communicated. Great leaders are passionate about their cause, and their words and behaviors move people to action. 



David Casullo (dcasullo@bates-communications.com) is president at Bates Communications, a national consulting firm specializing in leadership communication skills and strategy. His passion is developing leaders who have the courage and capability to change the world. His most recent book is Leading the High-Energy Culture, published by McGraw-Hill.

moving? let us know!

Send old AND new address, with mailing label if possible, to:

The Society for Nonprofits
P.O. Box 510354
Livonia, MI 48151

The post office WILL NOT forward copies of **Nonprofit World**. So let us know BEFORE you move so that you won't miss any issues.

please get in touch...

We would love to hear your response to anything in **Nonprofit World**, your comments about any aspect of the nonprofit sector, and your concerns about your daily work. Please get in touch in any of the following ways:

Drop us a note at: Letters to the Editor, Nonprofit World, P.O. Box 44173, Madison, Wisconsin 53744-4173.

E-mail to: muehrcke@charter.net or Jill@NonprofitWorld.org

Please include your name, organization, address, phone number, and e-mail address. If you'd like your comments to appear anonymously, please let us know.