

The Truth about Lying

Some lies are a polite, positive part of life (“I’d be delighted to come!”) or harmless exaggerations (“I’ve been to that restaurant dozens of times!”) It’s important to distinguish such innocuous falsehoods from destructive lies so that you can keep the harmful ones from wreaking havoc in your life and in your organization.

If you build a high-trust environment, where people aren’t afraid to tell the truth and are rewarded for doing so, you’ll see destructive lies disappear, as Carol Kinsey Goman makes plain in *The Truth about Lies in the Workplace* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, bkconnection.com). She suggests these pointers for building a culture of trust:

Always do what you say you’ll do. Be a model of trustworthiness.

Don’t set expectations that can’t be met. Be sure your expectations are clear and reasonable. Don’t have rules that will cause honest people to lie and cheat because they feel your demands are unfair. Involve them in decisions that will affect them, listen to what they have to say, and act on their input.

Acknowledge, reward, and promote honesty. Praise people for being open and aboveboard. Don’t criticize small missteps.

Celebrate the ways in which people differ from you. Encourage a flow of honest debate.

Take the risk of showing vulnerability. Tell your colleagues about your fears and flaws. Encourage them to ask “dumb” questions and voice “stupid” ideas by being willing to do so yourself.

Don’t tell someone you “don’t know” if you do know. Conversely, don’t be afraid to say you don’t know something if you truly don’t.

Create an atmosphere in which all people are valued for their unique selves and encouraged to tell the truth about who they are and what they think and feel. Let them bring their “whole selves” – including personal issues and idiosyncrasies – to work. Get to know them – their backgrounds, hobbies, and what matters to them.

If you make an error, own up to it in front of the group.

Let people know that failure isn’t fatal – that they won’t lose their jobs if they make a well-intentioned mistake. One driver of employee dishonesty is the fear of the consequences of error. Make it OK to fail in the context of doing one’s best. Help people learn from failure without placing blame.

Give employees input in creating a code of ethics, post it where they’ll see it daily, and remind them of it regularly. Research shows that these actions reduce dishonesty.

Align your body language with your words. If you want people to believe that you value their honest opinions, give them your full attention. Turn to face the person who’s talking, make eye contact, lean forward, and nod to show you’re listening. Open your mind and heart to understanding, *especially* if the speaker’s perspective is different from your own.

Fire destructive liars, regardless of who they are. 

Find Your Signature Voice

Your signature voice is a combination of your assumptions, energy, and communication strategies, explain Amy Jen Su and Muriel Maignan Wilkins in *Own the Room: Discover Your Signature Voice to Master Your Leadership Presence* (Harvard Business Review Press, hbr.org). Your assumptions (your beliefs about yourself, others, and the situation at hand) drive what you say and how you appear to others. Your energy and communication strategies affect your mindset.

Why Assumptions Matter: Your assumptions are crucial, because what you think and focus on affects what you’re able to achieve.

Why Energy Matters: Between 70 and 95% of what people “hear” comes through nonverbal cues, especially your body language and energy. Maintaining good energy is a matter of managing your stress, getting enough sleep, eating right, and using rituals such as breathing exercises that ground you physically. Identify your personal cues so you know when you’re in top shape and when your energy starts sliding. To resonate with others, manage how composed and expressive you are. Some situations require you to lean toward one end of the spectrum or the other.

Why Communication Matters: Countless communication strategies exist, yet we tend to return over and over to ones we’re comfortable with, rather than accessing all the possibilities available and adapting our style to our audience. For instance, there are a variety of ways to frame your message so it will engage and inspire people:

- **Strategic framing:** Tie your message to your organization’s current priorities.
- **Outcomes framing:** Connect your words to the outcomes you want to drive.
- **Metaphor framing:** Bring your message to life with a metaphor or analogy (“I need you to operate like a soccer team, not a swim team.”)
- **Sound-bites framing:** Create a pithy, memorable statement that encapsulates your overall message. 

Are You Making These Language Mistakes when Asking for Money?

The exact words you use when asking for donations can dramatically impact your results. For example:

Avoid the word “help,” as in “Help us raise the money for this project.” It connotes an organization that’s needy, weak, and insecure. Better phrasing: “I hope this project is something you and I can work on together.”

Instead of “Would you consider a gift of \$1,000?” try “We would like you to consider a gift of \$1,000.” Wording your request as a statement rather than a question gives it confidence and authority. It also turns your invitation from a closed question (requiring only a yes or no) into an assertion that challenges the prospect to respond appropriately.

Ask for a specific amount of money, not a range. It’s more assertive and less hesitant and will yield a larger commitment.



–adapted from *The Generosity Network* (crownpublishing.com)

Time-Tested Strategies to Outsmart Change

How you respond to unexpected upheaval can determine success or failure for you and your organization. In *Marketing Flexology* (marketingflexology.com), Engelina Jaspers shares how to build a marketing capability that can withstand any fluctuation or crisis. Some key take-a-aways:

People are demanding a new level of service and engagement. They expect organizations to follow the new marketing adage: “Better, faster, cheaper, smarter: Deliver all.”

For each project, you need to create a communication brief – a written agreement that guides communication across key contact points. Relying on verbal agreements holds too much chance of mistakes and miscommunications. The brief should spell out your objective, key message, and the parameters that will guide you. (For more details on crafting such a brief, see “Measure Twice, Cut Once: Anatomy of a Creative Brief,” NonprofitWorld.org.)

Successful marketing strategies answer people’s main question: “What’s in it for me?” They create a sense of urgency by using words such as *now*, *immediately*, *today*, *hurry*, and *fast*. They use actionable statements such as “Stop doing X. Start doing Y.”

A messaging framework is important because it arranges your organization’s messaging priorities. When you communicate a coherent messaging framework, all employees will be able to talk intelligently about your organization, whether they’re answering the phone, greeting a guest, delivering a presentation, or talking to potential donors. Everyone on your staff and board should be a positive messenger for your organization.

People with written goals are 50% more likely to achieve them than those without. Be sure you and others in your organization write down your goals for 30, 60, and 90 days.



How to Raise Your ZQ

If X is the factor with unknown consequences, we can consider Z the element with *known* effects. It’s what you want so badly that you’re willing to work hard to achieve it. Your ZQ is the power to be successful in your life, your leadership career, and your organization. Here are steps to harness that power, as described in *The Z Factor* (Career Press, careerpress.com):

1. Mind the culture. Be familiar with the culture around you – the way people in your organization get things done. Understanding and playing by those invisible rules builds trust. Only if others trust you can you lead, influence, and empower them.

2. Speak selflessly. Steer clear of *I*, *me*, and *my* in communications. Make everything about how your ideas will help those around you. Listen carefully to what others have to say, and value their input.

3. Learn 180-degree thinking. If you’re to grow, you need to change your perspective frequently. Turn around every so often, and look at things from the other side. That’s how you’ll come up with brilliant ways to solve problems and evolve as a person and an organization. 

Words You Should Never Use

The words you use – both to yourself and to others – can help you claim your greatest power. For example, you would be well served to purge words such as the following:

Eliminate *problem* from your vocabulary. Replace it with *challenge*. Doing so replaces the negativity associated with the problem with a positive array of possibilities.

Practice speaking without using “filler” words that add nothing to the meaning (or have lost their meaning through overuse). Examples: like, uh, um, you know, honestly, I mean, actually, so, absolutely, awesome, amazing, sort of, kind of, anyways, basically, et cetera, at the end of the day.

Don’t say *but*. The word *but* negates everything you said before it. For example, “I’m sorry for what I did, but you really made me mad.” See how you’ve nullified any intention to give a real apology?

If you’re ever tempted to use the word “utilize” – in speaking or writing – don’t! Substitute the word “use,” which means exactly the same thing and isn’t pretentious and overly complicated.

Instead of *want* say *choose*. The word *want* keeps you in a state of yearning. Rather than, “I want to commit to a new plan,” try, “I *choose* to commit to a new plan.” Right away, you’re deliberately creating a future. You now have a clear target for moving forward. 

– adapted from *Lights On!* (lightsonworkshop.com) and Diane Schwartz’s blog (prnewsonline.com/prnewsblog)

Explore the Mystery of Yourself

To make the most productive changes in yourself and your organization, commit to learning who you are and how to make the most of your gifts. *Why Wait to Be Great?* (Berret-Koehler Publishers, bkconnection.com) offers these life lessons to deepen your own wisdom and help you shepherd others on journeys of discovery and growth:

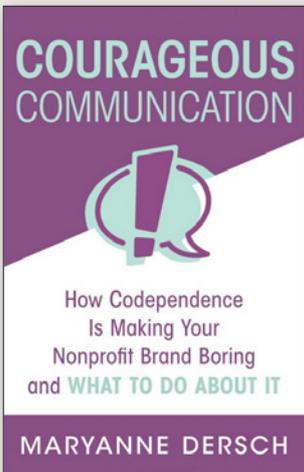
Pain is a pathway. Since change of any kind causes pain, and since pain offers the doorway to the greatest breakthroughs, it’s a good idea to learn to “do” pain well. Rather than avoid it, experience it, move through it mindfully, and ask yourself what it can teach you.

Face your greatest fear. Whatever you’re avoiding, do it now. You’ll be amazed at how much easier it is than you expect and how much you’ll grow as a result. Whether it’s having a tough conversation with a colleague, or stating your truth, or forgiving someone, the situation will continue to fester until you confront it.

The best way to teach is to be. Move out of the ineffective “rescuer” role into that of “empowerer.” The most powerful way to influence another person is through your actions.

Value transition time. Remind yourself that few people achieve what they want on the first attempt. Understand that transitions aren’t quick or easy. Resist the urge to rush on too quickly and, instead, open yourself to the space that surrounds you during a transition, feel the emotions, and give yourself the chance to adapt naturally and fully. 

Is Your Organization Codependent?



Many nonprofits have codependent relationships with their donors, Marianne Dersch contends in *Courageous Communication* (stonebrookpublishing.net). Codependence means that you try to please everyone. Rather than worrying about what others think, Dersch says, focus on sticking to your message and communicating it effectively. She outlines helpful ways to make a powerful impact through your message:

First change your feelings, then your behavior. If you truly feel that your organization is smart, interesting, and worth supporting, your communications will be stronger. Managing your emotions will change your thoughts, which will make you less codependent – less focused on what others think. You’ll need less praise and be able to handle criticism better. Rather than feel dependent on your donors, you’ll concentrate on creating the value that makes people want to support your organization.

Develop a brand promise – a unique statement about your organization that delivers a high-level connection with your customers. This is the promise that says, “We know you and we understand you.” It creates an emotional reaction in people. To develop a brand promise, probe those involved with your organization – staff, board, volunteers, and donors. Ask them what they love about you, what first attracted them to you, what they tell their friends about you. Look for the deepest emotional responses, and put them into your brand promise.

Craft a main message that tells people why they should care. This main message, often called a tagline, is different from your mission statement, which is an internal statement that gives an organization direction. The tagline is an audience-directed statement that describes the benefit of your organization.

Create a call to action tailored to each of your audiences. (Donate, volunteer, etc.)

Admit your organization’s failures, and welcome criticism. When you share your vulnerabilities and show that you’re trying to do better, you connect deeply with others.

Stop worrying about keeping your overhead low. That’s not the measure of your organization’s performance. It’s results that matter. People want impact. Focus on telling stories of value and interest and on being helpful, available, and accessible. 

How Did Diversity Fare in 2018? Highlights of the Year

Several key trends in the area of diversity and inclusion came to a head during the past year:

A new focus on transparency brought attention to “pinkwashing,” which occurs when an organization boasts that it’s female-friendly or gay-friendly but does so as a marketing ploy rather than as a sincere attempt at inclusion. Gender pay gap (GPG) reporting proved that little progress has been made in pay equity, with women still earning less than men. Research published in *Management Today* (managementtoday.co.uk) in April showed that there was actually an *inverse* correlation between organizations that had won gender awards and their GPGs.

Expect to see more challenges this April when the second round of GPG reporting is due. And look out for its extension to ethnicity.

In many ways, 2018 was a year of progress. There was increasing focus on intersectionality and more nuanced forms of identity over the previous focus on “strands” of diversity. For example, a heterosexual couple won their fight to be allowed a civil partnership. The U.K. royal wedding in May made history as a landmark for racial inclusion and diversity. African American and Black British culture featured prominently in the ceremony.

Starbucks closed its doors for race and bias training. *Vogue* and other magazines featured ethnic minority models as never before, and National Geographic admitted a racist past.

There were other landmark moments. Saudi Arabia ended its ban against women driving, Ireland overturned its abortion ban, and the U.K. unveiled a statue of suffragette Millicent Fawcett in London. The U.S. midterms saw a record number of women elected.

Female movie stars protested on the red carpet at Cannes about gender inequality in the TV and film industry, and Nike exited several senior male executives for alleged sexual harassment as Tesco faced a £4B equal pay claim. The new easyJet boss voluntarily cut his pay to the same as his (female) predecessor, as did several male BBC stars when their salaries became widely criticized.

LGBT+ pride is bigger than ever, with people celebrating their inclusion and India finally legalizing gay sex. The PurpleSpace movement has taken off, highlighting disability inclusion.

As a result of the gender pay gap studies, many organizations have changed their strategies. Instead of simply marketing themselves as diverse and inclusive, they’re starting to focus on actually becoming what they’ve been pretending to be.

With progress came backlash. The Kavanaugh Supreme Court appointment spotlighted dominant-group insecurity about diversity, and the new Brazilian president confirmed a trend toward male authority figures “taking back” control.

Racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in governance were hot topics at the Alliance for Nonprofit Management conference as well as many other nonprofit meetings in 2018. Conversations are focusing on the importance of going beyond lip service to create a culture of diversity, inclusion, and trust in nonprofit organizations.

The sum result: The need for more inclusion and equity was made plain this past year. Clearly, there have been real gains – and yet much remains to be done. 

– contributed by Stephen Frost, founder of Frost Included (frostincluded.com) and author of *Building an Inclusive Organization*, published by Kogan Page

Being Strategic about Communication

Nonprofit organizations, even those large enough to have communications departments, aren't always strategic about their communication efforts. In *Promoting Nonprofit Organizations: A Reputation Management Approach* (routledge.com), Ruth Ellen Kinzey discusses the value of thinking strategically, and offers steps and tools for doing so. A few key points:

While most nonprofit organizations think their purpose naturally makes them socially responsible, today corporate responsibility – even in the nonprofit sector – has taken on a multi-stakeholder approach. Expense-reduction efforts can cause nonprofits to become environmentally insensitive or to skimp on accountability and transparency. Kinzey explains the value of corporate citizenship to your organization's reputation and discusses strategies that highlight your social responsibility efforts, increasing your value in the community.

Your actions during a crisis affect your organization's ability to function. Preparing a crisis communication plan and practicing it before a disaster occurs is vital. Kinzey explains how to respond to a crisis in ways that will enhance your reputation.

The company you keep is important to your reputation. Cause-related marketing can have a great influence on your ability to raise funds. There are different ways to partner with businesses: Relationship to mission and the right partners are key elements. Kinzey explains the questions you need to answer before entering into a cause-related marketing agreement.

Social networking plays a powerful role in communicating with stakeholders. Kinzey suggests current online tools and measures to build reputation.

How you communicate is critical to engaging people, not only in raising funds but also in attaining volunteers and getting the most from paid staff. *Promoting Nonprofit Organizations* takes a comprehensive approach to using communications strategically to strengthen those connections. 

– reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

How to Open New Doors

If you want to create breakthroughs in your organization, be open to teamwork and collaboration. Build greater trust in your interactions with these keys:

Lean into discomfort. Be willing to innovate, give others the benefit of the doubt, and experiment with new ideas and behaviors. Doing so opens the door to an environment in which trust can build quickly.

Listen as an ally. Pay complete attention to people when they speak. Strive to understand their perspective and to find value rather than flaws. Listen from a learning posture, and make sure your body language gives the message, "I am joining with you as a partner." After listening actively, deeply, and fully, share what you heard and express appreciation.

State your intent and intensity. When you make a statement, clarify whether it's: (1) an initial idea, (2) an opinion you're committed to but may be willing to change, (3) an item requiring action, with little room for negotiation, or (4) a nonnegotiable position. 

–adapted from *Opening Doors to Teamwork & Collaboration* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, bkconnection.com)

Are You Ready for an Executive Transition?

Nonprofits live or die based on how well they transition to a new executive. Succession planning is a special concern as the wave of baby boomer retirements continue. The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City recognized the need and recently updated and re-released its popular "Nonprofit Executive Succession-Planning Toolkit."



The KC Fed toolkit provides timelines and templates to help nonprofits plan for three scenarios:

- It's an emergency: The executive departs suddenly.
- It's departure-defined: The executive plans to leave in the future.
- We need to develop leaders: Promote leadership from within.

The toolkit offers information you can use right now, such as:

- nine steps to take if your executive leaves suddenly
- four questions to answer when your executive plans to depart
- nine elements of developing leaders
- nine barriers to success and how to overcome them.

The toolkit is one of an array of resources that the KC Fed offers nonprofits. That's because nonprofits are powerful allies in its mission to encourage community development in low- and moderate-income communities.

For more on executive transitions, check out these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Planning to Succeed: Creating a Succession Plan (Vol. 29, No. 3)

Why Wisdom Is Being Lost – & How You Can Capture It (Vol. 27, No. 6)

Co-executives & Succession: A Radical Proposal for a Thorny Problem (Vol. 30, No. 3)

What to Do Before a Long-Term Leader Departs (Vol. 30, No. 5)

Avoid the Selfish Factor: Plan for Succession with Four Simple Rules (Vol. 36, No. 2) 

Why Good Questions Are Like Onions

Do you ever catch yourself saying, “I thought you meant . . .” or “I assumed . . .”? Assumptive listening can be dangerous, because you jump to conclusions about what someone’s saying rather than asking questions to make sure you have the right idea.

Asking good questions is like peeling an onion: You need to keep going deeper to get to the core of the matter. It’s amazing what you can learn with clarifications such as:

- **What I heard** you say was . . .
- **If I understand** you correctly, . . .
- **So what you’re** telling me is . . .

Seeking clarification has many benefits:

- **It shows you have a genuine interest** in trying to understand someone.
- **It demonstrates your credibility as a listener.**
- **It gets the other person talking** about what’s important to them.
- **It shows you value other perspectives** besides your own.
- **It builds** trust.
- **It gives you insights** into what the other person needs and wants so that you can give them the right information and support.

The best questions aren’t closed-ended queries that lead to a “Yes” or a “No” answer. They’re open-ended ones such as:

- **What** challenges . . . ?
- **Why or how** did you . . . ?
- **Can you tell me** about . . . ?

Great leaders ask good questions. Then they sit back and listen. 

—adapted from *Leadership by Choice* by Eric Papp (wiley.com)

Beyond the Briefs

To explore issues raised in these briefs in more detail, take a look at these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

- **Will You Be Ready when Disaster Strikes? A Primer in Crisis Communications** (Vol. 18, No. 3)
- **Why Feedback Is the Key to Your Success** (Vol. 35, No. 3)
- **Is a Cause-Related Partnership in Your Future?** (Vol. 32, No. 1)
- **Keep the Main Thing Up Front** (Vol. 36, No. 1)
- **A Path to Stronger Programs, Greater Engagement, and Less Burnout?** (Vol. 36, No. 1)
- **Grounded Visioning: A Quick Way to Create Shared Visions** (Vol. 26, No. 4)
- **Cynicism Rx: Authentic Communication** (Vol. 24, No. 6)
- **Leading from Feeling** (Vol. 27, No. 1)
- **Find Your Truths and Release Your Powerful Energy** (Vol. 31, No. 3)
- **What Are the Three Most Boring Words in Fundraising Appeals?** (Vol. 36, No. 2)
- **Empower Your Employees to Be Mini-Marketers** (Vol. 25, No. 6)
- **Powerful New Communication Tool: Engaging Both Sides of Your Brain** (Vol. 26, No. 3)
- **Time’s Up! What Do You Really Want?** (Vol. 33, No. 2)
- **Fighting Harassment & Improving Inclusion** (Vol. 36, No. 2)

NGO Governance around the Globe

Americans may have gotten a head start on most of the world when it comes to studying nonprofit organizations. After all, we did organize grassroots associational life early, to such an extent that others, beginning with Alexis de Tocqueville, looked to us to learn about voluntary associations. Now that nonprofits in other parts of the world are maturing, we can all learn from each other’s processes, practices, and problems. That’s what *Global Best Practices by CSO, NGO and Other Nonprofit Boards* is all about.

Put together by BoardSource and published by John Wiley & Sons (wiley.com), the comprehensive 290-page book includes a helpful glossary of terms. It defines CSOs (civil society organizations) as a wide array of organizations, community groups, NGOs, labor unions, indigenous groups, charities, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) are a subset of CSOs and encompass a diverse group of organizations that take different forms in different parts of the world.

In 11 chapters, experts from various global regions detail political, historical, legal, and cultural issues that make nonprofit sectors throughout the world both different and similar. Readers of this book learn many common challenges of governance faced by nonprofit organizations, such as staff-board relations, issues of transparency, and strategic planning. It explains how resolutions are sought and found in different countries.

The book’s editor, Penelope Cagney, attempts the daunting task of predicting what all this means for nonprofits in the face of key trends. Particular subjects may receive more credibility than warranted. For example, she seems to suggest an increased need for servant leadership, even though most leadership experts have moved beyond it to transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, and more recently, complexity leadership. An emerging trend affecting governance that is a missed opportunity here is the increasing recognition that leadership in some circumstances may rest less in individuals – even those acting in service to their followers – and more in the interactions between them.

Global Best Practices by CSO, NGO and Other Nonprofit Boards solidifies BoardSource as an expert – if not the expert – in nonprofit governance concerns, not only in the United States but on a global scale. There is the assumption throughout that nonprofit work is vital to make civil society stronger and better-coordinated and that governance is key to an effective nonprofit. Directors of nonprofits, whose titles may vary around the world, understand that they must be better educated to fulfill the roles they accept as governing volunteers for their organizations. Learning what is happening elsewhere will help them become more knowledgeable about these roles. 

— reviewed by Terrence Fernsler