

## Fundraising in the Age of COVID

A new report shows how nonprofits are surviving and even thriving during the ongoing pandemic. Key findings:

- **91% of respondents have managed to maintain full or some level of operations by adjusting their strategies**, increasing their social-media presence, holding virtual fundraisers, and hosting webinars and other digital events to draw new donors.
- **Most have enhanced their fundraising** in the past few months by creating new digital donation opportunities for donors (49.4%), offering new products or services (36.04%), and focusing on new donor segments (34.6%).
- **More than a third (35.32%) have applied for public support** through relief programs, subsidies, and other government assistance.
- **More than two-thirds (64.51%) are exploring partnership opportunities** with other organizations to address the pandemic's challenges.

Nearly half of respondents believe they can continue operating under current conditions as long as necessary, while 28% aren't sure, 11% worry they won't make it another year, and 10% fear they won't last six more months, according to the study by CAF America (cafamerica.org). Six in 10 organizations (59.67) are providing direct services to those affected by the coronavirus pandemic. 

## Good Trouble: How Nonprofits Can Lobby for Change

In this moment of turmoil and opportunity, don't forget one of your most important tools – the legal right to lobby for your cause. Andy Robinson of Train Your Board (trainyourboard.com) shares advice from Martha Collins, who notes that “the need for nonprofit organizations to advocate and lobby are becoming clearer and sharper.”

Here are her four things to remember as you embrace your role as a nonprofit lobbyist and advocate.

- 1. Yes, it's legal for nonprofits to lobby.** The IRS makes it plain: “A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying,” although “too much lobbying activity risks loss of tax-exempt status.”
- 2. Be about the big picture.** We often fight for things that benefit our organizations directly, such as the charitable tax deduction. Or we fight to maintain our property tax exemptions. “It's far more important, however, to use your organization's voice to fight for things like a livable minimum wage or access to quality healthcare for everyone.”
- 3. Don't be afraid.** A University of Oregon professor once wrote: “Fear of running afoul of your organization's tax-exempt status, or losing the support of important donors by being seen as ‘too partisan or political,’ may be preventing nonprofit organizations from speaking out or encouraging their members or clients to do so . . . . Yes, decisions to take action should be given careful consideration, [but] fear alone is not a good enough reason to fail to act.”
- 4. Small steps can have a big impact.** A few decades ago, a woman in Seattle decided to challenge misleading labeling on food products. It took a lot of people (and several years)

to pass national legislation to address this problem, but it all began with a small group of grassroots advocates. Remember the phrase: If not me, who? And if not now, when? Build your skills, increase your courage, and sharpen your strategy.

For more, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

**Can You Lobby for a Cause You Believe in?** (Vol. 36, No. 2)

**Are Lobbying and Electioneering O.K.?** (Vol. 17, No. 3)

**How to Lobby without Breaking the Law** (Vol. 14, No. 5)

**Have You Registered under the New Lobbying Act** (Vol. 14, No. 4) 

## The Key to Employee Happiness & Productivity

New research from Identity Realization (identityrealization.com) shows that whether working from home or in the changing, COVID-19 office, the key to good performance – and the key to success for every organization – is “happiness” powered by employee autonomy.

The survey, titled “COVID-19: The Value of a Creative Culture,” explored the upsides of working from home and the elements of the old workplace that employees were missing, as well as the psychological effects of COVID-19 on feelings, performance, and function.

During lockdown, a happy employee was seen to be autonomous and connected to both friends and colleagues. Pandemic notwithstanding, these psychological engines delivered a strong sense of wellness. This, in turn, meant better engagement across the organization, less stress, higher feelings of creativity, and sustained performance.

Organizational leaders should encourage conversations, ease up on monitoring, and allow autonomy, all of which result in a happy and engaged employee, says Dr. Craig Knight, Founder of Identity Realization. “The results of the research were dramatic and found that happiness is engendered by a combination of active social and business connections, and of being allowed to manage the work flow as the employee saw fit.”

“Nobody needs a pool table or ‘happy hour’ at the office,” says Dr. Knight. “The research indicates that what they do need is trust from their employer, meaningful contact with others, and freedom of choice.” 

## Robert's Rules of Order Updated for Board Meetings

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has required many boards to use a virtual meeting format for board meetings. In light of this shift, Robert's Rules of Order has been newly revised to ensure that motions, voting, and other important procedures are approached properly within a virtual sphere.

BoardEffect has updated its Robert's Rules of Order Toolkit to include the new revisions. You can find the toolkit at [boardeffect.com/roberts-rules-order-guide/](http://boardeffect.com/roberts-rules-order-guide/). 

## Does Your Culture Facilitate Fundraising?

From the point of view of raising funds, there are three critical aspects of your organization's culture:

- 1. Do you have one dominant source of revenue or multiple revenue streams?** Look carefully to see whether rigid ways of thinking about funds are putting your organization at risk. The more flexible, innovative, and adaptable your fundraising culture, the more likely your success.
- 2. Are you inwardly or outwardly focused?** If you're inwardly focused, you manage your programs with little concern about the community that surrounds you. If you're outwardly focused, you promote your organization actively through marketing, public relations, and other types of community outreach. It's important to maintain a balance between the two. To be sure that you aren't leaning too far in one direction, survey your stakeholders frequently, and listen carefully to what they say.
- 3. Do you regularly revisit your fundamental assumptions?** Take time to ask hard questions about how the world around you is changing and how you may need to reframe your strategies and rebrand yourself for the future. 

—adapted from *The Nonprofit Fundraising Solution*, harpercollinsleadership.com

## A Self-Help Book for the Nation

The United States has its flaws, but is still one of the most diverse nations and has great democratic potential. Much of that potential rests in the pluralism of civil society. The nonprofit sector has the ability to act as a moderator between civil society and political action, provided we don't give in to — or even enable — the politics of fear and hate.

In *America, We Need to Talk: A Self-Help Book for the Nation* (Seven Stories Press, sevenstories.com), Joel Berg chastises the nonprofit sector for its scandals, for not serving constituents more effectively, for not advocating enough, and for failing to address the need for diverse approaches. Still, he's not willing to give up on the sector, because it holds great potential for democracy.

Nonprofits can serve as avenues to change if they learn to become better organizational citizens. Berg helps us understand why that's important and offers nonprofits a number of proposals for reclaiming their role of reflecting the public will. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## Reinvent Yourself

The most successful organizations weave continual transformation into their strategies. In *The Road to Reinvention*, Josh Linkner (josseybass.com) provides exercises to help you do so:

- 1. Use societal trends**, such as an aging population, social media changes, environmental awareness, even dining habits, to open areas for exploration. What might your customers want today that they didn't care about 10 years ago? Conduct

a brainstorming session and list as many trends as you can. Mix and match them to explore new opportunities.

- 2. Add a secret ingredient** to one of your current services. Ask: What *one* thing could we add to make this service truly special?
- 3. Borrow ideas** from nature, art, other industries, science fiction novels, movies, or any area that inspires you.
- 4. Zoom in** so close that you see something you've been missing all along. Or zoom out to gain a broader perspective on your organization.
- 5. Ask your team: "If you had a magic wand** and could invent the ideal solution to solve our customers' needs, what would it be?" 

## How to Apologize when You've Said Something Racist

What should you do if you realize you've said something racist to one of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) folks in your life? Even if it was unintentional, you must do the hard but necessary thing: Apologize.

"Many people are realizing biases and gaslighting happen to BIPOC people much more frequently than previously thought," says Jor-El Caraballo, co-founder of Viva Wellness (vivawellnessnyc.com). When we realize we've said the wrong thing, we may react by rushing to assure the person, "But I'm not racist!"

But that's defensiveness, not apology. Here's the right way to apologize:

- 1. Acknowledge the hurt.** When people are hurt, they want to feel validated, seen, and understood. Acknowledging the hurt is the biggest part of a successful apology.

It's important to say something like, "I can tell that you're upset right now, and I'm sorry you're hurting." Acknowledging someone's pain, without qualification, can be incredibly healing.

- 2. Take responsibility** for your specific behavior. Don't explain why you did it, unless you're asked. People usually understand why you did it — but that doesn't change how it made them feel. Don't talk about your intent. Instead, focus on the impact of your behavior.

"Apologizing isn't about explaining," Caraballo says. "It's about communicating compassion."

Resist the urge to deny that you're racist. "It's not up to [white people] to decide what's racist or biased and what isn't," Caraballo says. Listen and absorb rather than trying to control the conversation.

- 3. Focus on "I" statements.** That looks like this: "I'm sorry I said X and hurt you. I shouldn't have said that."

Not this: "I'm sorry you're upset." 

—from MindBodyGreen (mindbodygreen.com)

## Change the World by Empowering Women

Sixty percent of the world's people who live in extreme poverty are women and girls. Women do two-thirds of the world's work but earn only 10% of the world's income. Nearly two-thirds of children not going to school are girls. It's clear that improving opportunities for girls and women can go a long way toward ending poverty and hunger. That's why CARE has turned its attention to women helping women.

*Leading With CARE: How Women Around the World Are Inspiring Businesses, Empowering Communities, and Creating Opportunity* (josseybass.com) contains tales of how microloans and educational opportunities have helped women become self-sufficient. When given the opportunity, these women went on to build community, conserve the environment, and remedy social injustice.

Building self-sufficiency means addressing the reasons for poverty and not imposing solutions. This book is a valuable lesson to leaders who are interested in building enduring change from the bottom up and who are patient enough to understand that it begins with small, often subtle, efforts. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## Combat Problems with No-Excuses Leadership

Nonprofits are facing a rocky time. But they must be careful not to let uncertainty and disruption become an excuse for failure, says Troy Nix (troynix.com), a motivational speaker and author of *Eternal Impact: Inspire Greatness in Yourself and Others*.

No, you didn't create the circumstances that led to today's challenges, but it's your responsibility to get your organization and your people through the situation you now face. To be successful in the coming months, he says, leaders need to do the following:

**Set an example.** Ultimately, you would like everyone in your organization to take responsibility and refuse to make excuses. "But you can't expect that of others if you aren't willing to set the example and claim responsibility yourself for any failures," Nix says. The best leaders never point a finger at anyone but themselves. Setting an example will have a constant impact on your employees, and they'll know they can rely on you.

**Do a little introspection.** If you feel the urge to make an excuse for any failed performance, look inward instead and ask yourself the following questions:

**Could I have acted differently** to prevent this outcome?

**What could I have done** to better improve the end result?

**How did my actions or inactions** play a part in the failure?

"I guarantee that if you do this and are honest with yourself," Nix says, you'll find errors, disappointments, and fiascos that link directly back to yourself.

**Take ownership.** People don't understand just how much they affect others when they decide to take responsibility for any and all actions. "We must own what we do, and we have to own what others under our command or influence do, even

though it might be miles away from us and somebody else is executing the plan," Nix says. "When you get up every morning and look at yourself in the mirror, are you owning what you're doing, or are you making excuses?"

Whenever you're leading an organization, the ultimate responsibility for any failure is yours. "It may be because you failed to train people properly or because you failed to hire the right person. It may be because you failed to develop a proper strategy or because you failed to develop the right culture," Nix says. "It's ultimately your failure, and no excuse can ever absolve you of the responsibility of personal ownership." 

## Using Language Thoughtfully in a Complex Environment

The words we use are important. They express our fundamental beliefs and show us if we're truly working for the change we desire. When used or misused, words and phrases shape our attitudes and behaviors. A language steeped in war (war on poverty, war on drugs, war on crime, trade wars), competition, and authoritarianism, for example, will normalize distance and "othering" and either/or, win/lose behavior. Such words make any efforts we take toward justice more difficult.

Questioning how we use words is exactly what Marilyn McEntyre asks us to do in *Speaking Peace in a Climate of Conflict* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, eerdmans.com). It's critical to the work of our organizations to take the time to carefully consider how our language changes the world — or doesn't. Each of us, individuals and organizations, can shift how we approach wicked problems through the words and phrases we use.

- **Does the term "climate change"** connote a distant phenomenon over which we have little control?
- **Does the word "racism"** water down damaging concepts such as white supremacy?
- **"Freedom"** has become associated with individual liberty to do what each person wants, but the great thinkers associate freedom with imagination.

Art helps free the imagination. McEntyre encourages us to consider how artistic expressions can edge us out of our comfort zones. She also addresses euphemisms and metaphors, exploring their original meanings, how they have evolved, and how we can claim or reclaim them. She considers the value of humor as an important component of communication.

She reminds us that we don't need to map how to communicate for all situations. What we do need to do with more frequency is consider how we communicate specificity and clarity in each context. Our words and phrases determine how well we're co-evolving with the complex environments in which we operate. Language, McEntyre explains, is a crucial tool that can bring about the justice our organizations seek.



—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## Responding to the Need for Continual Learning

There are many higher-education programs in nonprofit management. Students in these programs gain an understanding of the tools nonprofits use to serve their communities. The growth of these programs in the late 1990s led to the formation of the National Academic Centers Council (NACC) to support those studying the nonprofit sector. In 2015, NACC released curricular guidelines, and now Edward Elgar Publishing (e-elgar.com) has published a guide for instructors who teach nonprofit management and leadership.

The book, *Teaching Nonprofit Management*, is useful for practitioners as well. Nonprofit leaders can adapt the exercises for their team members and focus on their organizations' particular needs by selecting the relevant chapters.

Each chapter's author is an expert in a particular field of nonprofit management (fundraising, finances, marketing, strategy development, communication, and so on). The guidebook does a good job of explaining how these fields interact with one another. Critical thinking, opportunity costs, and systems approaches are key elements in understanding how all the aspects of nonprofit management interact, and this book offers suggestions and tools to generate these connecting principles.

All nonprofits share some fundamental challenges, and *Teaching Nonprofit Management* presents ways to optimize standard practices. Each organization has unique concerns, so the book also acknowledges the diversity of nonprofit organizations and the changing environments in which they operate, leaving space for (and often encouraging) adaptive practices. As our social environment changes and nonprofit needs evolve, this book can serve as a compass to help organizations become sustainable or regenerative organs of their communities. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## What Not to Do

What you *don't* do is often as important as what you *do*. That's why "Not-to-Do" tips are an integral part of Karen Eber Davis's *Let's Raise Nonprofit Millions Together* (kedconsult.com). Here are a few:

**Don't ask people to fundraise.** Instead, ask them to "help grow the community" or "invite people to get involved" or "find out what people value." Or make a specific request: "Will you issue six invitations to your friends?" Why? What you mean by fundraising and what others hear can be worlds apart.

**Stop saying, "Thank you, and."** Your gratitude shouldn't be a prelude to another request. Express your appreciation and stop. Allow your gratefulness to stand out. When you leave space, your recognition will be savored.

**Don't train too much at once.** Focus on building one skill or explaining one important concept at a time. And, be sure to reinforce what you already taught. None of us can absorb — or retain — as much as we might hope.

**Never use long words or long sentences** when short ones will do. Practice brevity. Use these short sentences often: Thank you. Got it. Wonderful.

**Don't expect an immediate response.** If you've asked someone for something — to give money, join your board, or connect in any way — practice patience. Mentally remove yourself from wanting an answer *now*. You'll turn people off if you seem to be stalking them or being overeager.

**Quit dead-end conversations.** Avoid ending conversations, correspondence, or any gathering without a next step. Instead, outline what's next. Replacing dead-ends with next steps generates forward movement.

**Don't hold long board meetings.** Cut your agenda in half. Focus on critical items. Pick your top points. Save the rest for another time — or never (many issues resolve themselves). 

## How to Foster Creative Breakthroughs

What makes a genius? Eric Weiner dissects this question in his fascinating book *The Geography of Genius* (Thorndike Press, gale.com/thorndike) and concludes that genius has more to do with environment than heredity. The following tips have been connected to ingenious ideas, innovation, and creativity throughout the ages:

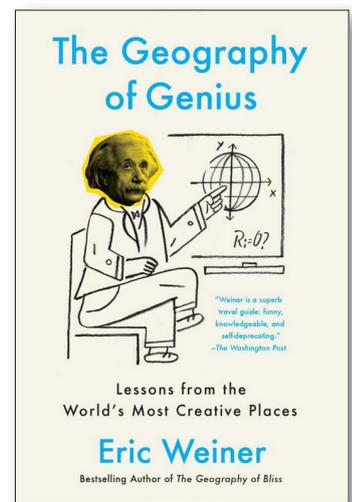
**Take a walk.** "Many a genius has done his or her best thinking while walking," Weiner asserts, citing research showing that creativity levels are "consistently and significantly higher" for walkers versus sitters. This research measured divergent thinking — the type of thinking that leads to unexpected solutions. Convergent thinkers are trying to find one correct answer to a question, while divergent thinkers reframe the question entirely.

**To encourage innovation, focus on intrinsic motivation.**

Studies show that people are most creative when they aren't motivated by rewards or evaluations (extrinsic motivation). The most ingenious solutions come when people are motivated by enjoyment, satisfaction, and the challenge of the work itself.

**Empathize with suffering.** A disproportionate number of geniuses have lost a parent at a young age. This fact echoes studies that show the importance of embracing the dark as well as light sides of life. Creativity requires you to be open to all aspects of human existence and be willing to face the pain so that you can transform it into something beautiful.

**Welcome the views of outsiders.** The more amenable you are to diverse ideas, the more creative you'll be, Weiner tells us. Psychologists have identified such openness to diversity as the single most important trait of exceptionally creative people. 

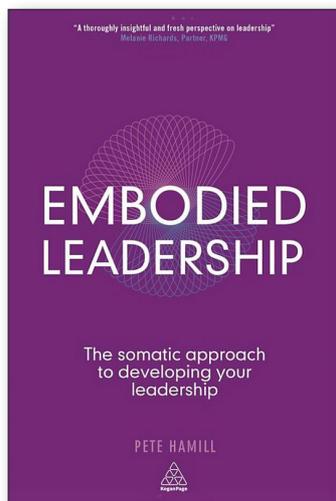


## Become a Mind-Body Leader

Cutting-edge research points to an integral connection between your body and mind. To be the best leader possible, you need to use both, as Pete Hamill makes clear in *Embodied Leadership: The Somatic Approach to Developing Your Leadership* (KoganPage Press, koganpage.com). He lays out these steps to using your body and mind to develop authority, presence, and impact as a leader:

### 1. Learn the Centering Technique.

- **Stand up** with your arms at your sides. Imagine someone is pulling on a hair at the top of your head. Let your spine stretch upward. Be careful not to raise your chin.
- **Relax your body**, starting with the top of your head, moving down through your forehead, eyes, jaw, shoulders, chest, stomach, legs, and feet.
- **Balance your weight** on both feet equally and between the heels and balls of your feet.
- **Take some deep breaths**, bringing the breath right down into your stomach and breathing out fully. Bring your attention to your body's center of gravity – the place on your body where your weight is most concentrated. Notice what you feel from that center.
- **Practice this technique.** For a week, every time the phone rings, center yourself using the steps above. At the end of the week, notice what a difference this has made in your life.



### 2. Make a Declaration.

Answer these questions aloud (ideally with a partner): What is your life's purpose? What are you committed to achieving as a leader? Form your answers into a statement of what you're committed to. Practice speaking this declaration (aloud or to yourself) whenever you center yourself throughout the day. Share it with others and have them help you make it real.

### 3. Connect to Your Body.

Find a good massage practitioner, and set up regular appointments for massage or body work. During this work, notice where you hold tension, and practice relaxing those parts of your body and breathing deeply and mindfully. Also, spend 10-20 minutes a day sitting quietly and paying attention to your breath. Such practices will accelerate your development as a leader.

### 4. Get to Know Your Conditioned Tendencies.

Spend time becoming familiar with your reactions when you're knocked into a stress response. Becoming aware of how you react in stressful situations will help you center yourself more quickly in response. In addition, you'll develop your ability to be more effective in conflict situations. 

## Throw Out Those Old Fundraising Models

For too long, fundraisers have been wedded to inefficient models, according to Greg Warner of MarketSmart (imarketsmart.com). "Why has this sector clung to its failed strategies?" he asks. The answer, he believes, is that "too many fundraisers listen to bad ideas from consultants and people with big megaphones but no real-world experience."

His book *Engagement Fundraising* uses research, case studies, and cutting-edge technology to help fundraisers cultivate the best donors for long-term success. Engagement fundraising is about engaging people rather than soliciting money. It's about conversations, not transactions. Warner makes many smart suggestions, including:

**Target passionate donors** who are most likely to deliver large gifts. Legacy gifts and major gifts can come from anyone, not just those "moved up" by your organization. So forget the concept of moving people up the pyramid from small to large donations, and, instead, focus on those most likely to give larger amounts in the first place.

**Use surveys not only to gather information** but to give people the chance to offer feedback. People love to share their opinions, and it's a great way to boost engagement. As one fundraising expert put it, "If you want advice, ask for money, but if you want money, ask for advice."

**Leverage technology to learn** what your most engaged supporters want and then to involve them on their own terms, deliver personalized experiences to them, and relate with them in meaningful ways.

**Remember the pereto principle**, which states that 80% of your revenue will come from 20% of your donors. Nowadays, it's closer to 90% of your revenue coming from 10% of donors. So, you should be using your budget to provide tremendous value to those 10%. There's no point spending money on acquiring new, low-level donors who don't have enough interest, are disengaged, and lack the capacity to make impactful donations.

**Learn why people care, and then give them** something of value. Adopt an attitude of giving to donors with no expectations of getting anything in return. High-capacity donors want to give. But if they're not getting the value they deserve, they'll leave.

**Track and measure** your donors' engagements with your organization online. The more they engage, the more they'll give. When their engagement reaches a certain level, offer them the chance to make a major and/or planned gift. They'll be glad you did! 

## Communicate for Success

Your communications success depends on your organization's culture, as Sarah Durham explains in *The Nonprofit Communications Engine* (Big Duck, bigduck.com). If your culture isn't about communicating well internally, your organization won't communicate well externally either.

In a healthy culture of communications:

**All staff** view communications as vital.

**Everyone collaborates** to achieve communications that express the organization's values.

**Communication is inclusive** and equitable. Many organizations have racialized and gendered divisions of labor, with women and minorities in subordinate – rather than leadership – positions. Such a workplace creates power-related tensions and destroys healthy communication.

**Empathy is a core part** of the culture. People work to understand one another, and compassion is built into decision-making and interactions.

**The organization's voice** is clear, credible, compelling, and consistent.

**Your communications engine doesn't depend** on just a few people. It can function independently. That means that there are written workflow documents to help new people quickly get up to speed. When one or two people control all communications, there's a risk of failure when they're no longer part of the team.

**The organization engages** the right people to take action. These people are committed to your mission and goals.

**The organization is clear** who its target audiences are, has a strategy to engage them, and has solid plans to implement that strategy.

**The organization has the tools** – the brand elements, content, media, software, and other resources – needed to communicate effectively.

**The organization gathers data** and seeks feedback to get smarter and communicate better.

*The Nonprofit Communications Engine* includes an excellent self-assessment tool to help you evaluate your own culture and decide where you need to improve. The book also provides a useful framework to put those results into action. 

## Beyond the Briefs

To explore issues raised in these briefs in more detail, check out these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

**Top 10 Trends: How Major Donors Are Changing & What to Do about It** (Vol. 31, No. 4)

**Surveys Provide Crucial Feedback** (Vol. 22, No. 5)

**How to Run the Perfect Board Meeting – While Inspiring Board Members to Raise Funds** (Vol. 36, No. 4)

**Cracking the Diverse-Income Code** (Vol. 35, No. 1)

**End Excuses, Add Action** (Vol. 38, No. 2)

**Push the Clear Button to Eliminate Stress** (Vol. 30, No. 5)

**Why Focus on Bequests? The Facts Tell the Story** (Vol. 36, No. 4)

**Embrace Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice** (Vol. 36, No. 2)

**What Followers Want from Leaders: Capitalizing on Diversity** (Vol. 25, No. 5)

**A Path to Stronger Programs, Greater Engagement, and Less Burnout?** (Vol. 36, No. 1)

**How to Tap into Purpose to Motivate People** (Vol. 38, No. 2)

**From Government Funds to Income Diversity: A Map For The Quest** (Vol. 35, No. 4)

**Has Your Organization Lost Its Soul?** (Vol. 28, No. 3)

**To Be an Ingenious Leader, Take Charge of Your Learning** (Vol. 37, No. 3)

**Creating a Climate for Innovation** (Vol. 29, No. 4)

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**Be a Better Leader by Being a Careful Listener** (Vol. 37, No. 1)



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