

Board Retreat
September 27 – 28, 2008
Depot Suites, 7th & Washington in Corvallis

Board Present:

Camille Freitag, Bettina Schempf, Chris Bentley (Saturday), Larry Plotkin, Fred Heil, Liz Kelly, Toni Hoyman, and Greg Alpert

Not Present:

Staff Present: Michele Adams

Facilitator: Marcia Shaw

Presenters: Mark Goehring, Gary Barnes

Scribe: Claire Pate

Toni Hoyman opened the meeting and made introductions. She outlined the agenda for the next two days, with Saturday am facilitated by Gary Barnes, Reliant Behavioral Health, and Saturday afternoon/Sunday facilitated by Mark Goehring, Cooperative Development Services.

The objectives for the retreat are 1) to learn how to address conflicts productively and to learn people's personality styles, especially with so many new Board members; and 2) to work on compensation criteria for the GM.

Gary Barnes, Reliant Behavioral Health, used a model for effective team functioning called Strengths Finder which is a system of identifying strengths and dysfunctions. Each Board member had responded to a questionnaire and Saturday morning was used to review the results and explain how to apply what was learned from the results.

He offered up the following outline of his presentation, which formed the structure for the group discussion.

- What is a “team?” Is a volunteer community board a team? Do you want one? Do you need one? *Consensus is that it is and that one is needed*
- The five dysfunctions of a team
 - Inattention to “Results”.
 - *What is the focused goal for the Board? Is it a successful Co-op? Often, we settle on that which is most easily measured, such as on amount of sales. Work needs to be done on just what it is. (Needs work!!)*
 - *Desire for individual credit. Holding tight to our individual agendas is a problem.*
 - *Policy governance model forces us to look at results, but it is tough with the turnover on the Board.*
 - *We need work on the big picture goals; we have our heads down looking at the day-to-day and not the vision.*
 - *The devil is in the detail of the goals.*
 - *Do we communicate well to the larger audience.*
- Avoidance of “Accountability”

- *Once you commit, and you know what you have committed to, you can hold each other accountable*
 - *If you don't have trust and there is a lack of commitment, we avoid accountability.*
 - *The owners sometimes have a perception that we are not accountable because they do not know how we work.*
 - *Progress reviews are not really set up. There is never enough time to review what we've been doing.*
 - *It is important to take the time to debrief and evaluate performance and process.*
 - *Accountability is related to facing conflict. Letting people know when you have been let down, or they haven't done what you thought the understanding was.*
 - *Holding people accountable is better done face to face, not via email. Be ready to take the time it takes to talk it through.*
 - *Sometimes it might be easier to e-mail. But it doesn't always convey the emotion and gives no opportunity for give and take.*
 - *The book "Blink" is a great discussion about non-vocal communication and what our expressions and body features express.*
 - *It is rare that Board work can be done effectively via e-mail. (Needs work to come to an agreement about this!!)*
- **Lack of "Commitment"**
 - *The lack of clarity and/or the fear of being wrong prevents team members from making decisions in a timely and definitive way.*
 - *There is not clarity in what the big vision is. We lost so many of the board members who came up with the vision last time.*
 - *When you come on to something new, how long is it before you pack up your toys to go home? If you don't all get on the same page, you'll pack up sooner.*
 - *One of the indicators of lack of commitment, is when there is lack of discussion.*
 - *Knowing what our priority is for the next year; sometimes it shifts because of what happens during the year, such as "Market of Choice" coming in.*
 - *Committing includes being willing to be wrong.*
 - *It is good at the end of meeting to have 15 minutes of discussion about what is it we really agreed we are going to do. (Needs work!!)*
- **Fear of "Conflict"**
 - *Conflict is necessary. Without it issues don't get out on the table.*
 - *Conflict is not a sign of failure, but is something needed to grow.*
 - *It is important to understand that people have different ideas.*
 - *When you are in the middle of conflict, you become flooded with emotion and physiological reactions. Logic can go out the window with emotional floods.*
 - *Often, we forget things that we don't like*
 - *Key to reducing emotional flooding is to have a positive balance in the emotional bank account.*
 - *Tuesdays with Morrie helped with dealing with the emotional flooding.*
 - *Fear is a word that shows up a lot.*
 - *It seems that people speak their minds freely at the Board meetings.*

- *If we all have the same goal, then conflict is more objectively about the means of getting to it.*
- *When disagreement is about content we do well; but when feelings are hurt we don't do well.*
- *Goal of discussions should be unfiltered debate.*
- *Important to "mine" for conflict. Important to get their input.*
- *Consent agenda sometimes results in conflict because there is an emotional hurdle to pulling something off of it. Need to ask what is the point of the agenda item; is it helpful to have a discussion of it? For example, the GM's report on the "Ends" should not have been on the consent agenda.*
- *Meeting design – there is a tension between amount of time vs. need to discuss.*
- **Absence of "Trust"**
 - *Gotta have trust first, then conflict can be dealt with and issues hashed out.*
 - *Uncomfortableness with vulnerability – it is a different vulnerability in a Board. Like the ability to say something without fearing that someone is going to say you're an idiot. Vulnerability is being ready to be wrong.*
 - *How do we encourage others to be vulnerable? Need a culture of not attacking each other inappropriately. There needs to be an agreement to talk about how something makes you feel, then you take ownership of your own feelings.*
 - *Not knowing what others' agendas are for the Co-op and for being on the Board. Need to share with each other. (Needs work!!)*
 - *We have the same goals – the "Ends" – but the agendas we have might reflect the paths we want to be taking to get to those "Ends."*
 - *Causes: hesitance to ask for help*
 - *Without trust, any type of feedback feels like criticism*
 - *Foundation of teamwork*
 - *Everything builds on the ability to give and take.*
 - *In past, have been stymied in our trust that we can deal with conflict.*
 - *There is the issue of the GM being able to trust the Board, and the Board trusting the GM.*
 - *There needs to be more time upfront getting to know each other as new members come onto the Board. (Needs work!!) Are there ways to do this within the framework of a Board meeting?? How about thanking people for saying things, give positive comments.*

Team results as a group, based on the test everyone took consisting of 15 questions. Level of trust was the most dysfunctional (4 out of 8 rated it low). Accountability, 3 rated it as low.

Personal history exercise. The following questions were asked:

- Where were you born? How many siblings?
- What was the biggest challenge you've faced in your life?

One of the messages of doing an exercise like this is to lose some of the vulnerability.

There was then a discussion of each member's strengths, and how to make the strengths work for the group.

Saturday afternoon and Sunday were facilitated by Mark Goehring, who set the stage as follows:

Importance of Role of GM... motivate staff, happy staff, set culture of store, critical in process of change, face and interface of the organization, interpreter to the board re trends in industry, so... we get what we want

Compensating the GM... reflect our values, livable wages, recruit, retain and motivate the GM, commensurate with size and type of role, something to aspire to, sets up GM as the boss/leader.

The end result of the discussions was a consensus on the following GM compensation goal and criteria: below:

Goal: To inspire and motivate the GM to do what is best for the co-op; to achieve new goals.

Expectations and Limitations:

1. The plan completed by 10/08 should run from 1/2009 through 12/2010. (in the future the plan should be completed by September.)
2. The plan should comply with a reasonable interpretation of all relevant policies.
3. The plan should be affordable for the co-op, under all foreseeable economic scenarios.
4. The plan should be in scale to the compensation plans of the other managers employed by the co-op.
5. The plan should be easily and objectively measurable/ calculable.
6. The plan should consider the complete compensation package: base, raise criteria, bonus/contingent components, benefits, deferred compensation, etc.
7. The plan should be in line with co-op, industry and local standards.