



Provoking Flourishing Not-for-profits

Call forth your best, then play above that

NOW I Get It

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I used to be embarrassed to say the words in the title. I didn't want people to think I didn't get it. I wanted them to think I knew a lot – maybe even all of it. In my personality assessments, I crave acceptance and acknowledgement. For most of my life, I thought that meant that I had to get it, understand it, be on top of it. God forbid I should appear ignorant. That would lead to disapproval and dismissal.

Then I read about the recording of *Kind of Blue* in Miles Davis' autobiography. I ran across one of those short, pithy sentences that change your life, one of those concise compositions that provoke you to get it in a whole new way. Here it is:

Play your best, then play above that. That's where great music happens.



That's what Davis asked of his musicians, constantly. And the greats of jazz responded positively and did just that. Tribute after tribute to Davis talks about how he prodded and provoked his colleagues to play their best, then play above that. They were all deeply grateful for that kind of support. They were realistic about Davis' foibles and failings, but they accepted and acknowledged his brilliance as well, a brilliance that provided space and support for them to make themselves better musicians.

There's a variety of ways we could put this crucial dynamic into words:

- Life-long learning
- Enhancing excellence
- Improving impact
- Growing in grace
- Broadening benefit

All point to something that is crucial to good jazz and good not-for-profit service – a passion for doing good even better.

NOW, for me, is another acronym – Nourishing Organizational Wellbeing. That's what our life-long learning is meant to serve. That's what happens when we constantly seek to enhance the excellence we offer and broaden the benefit we generate.

So, here's the question to explore with this Provocation. "What do you do best and how can you improve it for the nourishing of your organization's wellbeing?" Enjoy the conversations and let me know what you get NOW.



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