



Provoking Flourishing Not-for-profits

Call forth your best, then play above that

4 Ps for Organizational Flourishing

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I have been asking colleagues over the past few months what they think is troubling not-for-profits most these days. From their astute and diverse answers, and from my own experiences, I have chosen four key problems that interfere with not-for-profit organizations finding their groove:

- **people** on the board and/or the staff are in conflict or disengaged
- **purpose** is confusing or lacking
- **possibilities** are suppressed or ignored
- **processes** are ineffective or non-existent for **people** to implement the **possibilities** chosen to achieve the **purpose**.

If these 4 Ps are disrupting your not-for-profit, negativity abounds and a great groove is impossible.

To get unstuck from the negativity, I invite you to shift your attention from the problem to the aspiration. Your goal is to help your not-for-profit flourish, to be the best you can be in its service, then find ways of improving on that. You do not ignore the problems, but rather reframe them as barriers to achieving the aspiration. That more positive perspective creates a whole different vibe.

'Groove' is a term commonly used in jazz. It refers to an expression of intent and commitment that is emotionally communicative and soulful, a set of interactions that move people along together in beneficial and enjoyable ways. Nonprofits (and any other type of organization, actually) can find that kind of flow when their **people** create space for the consideration of a broad range of **possibilities** for achieving a clear **purpose** and design **processes** to make the chosen possibilities a reality.

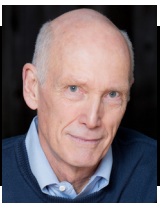


The best model I have found for this kind of organizational flourishing is a jazz group. And I believe that you are all jazz musicians. The most common form of jazz or improvisation in human experience is ordinary conversation, those interchanges of sound and substance that happen when you talk with each other. That is how your not-for-profit grows, one conversation after another. If you manage the sound and substance of your voice in those conversations the way jazz musicians manage the sound and substance of their instruments in a performance, you will create a far more successful and satisfying not-for-profit.

For your not-for-profit board and/or staff to flourish like a jazz group that is 'in the groove,' here are the positive imperatives for transforming the 4 Ps:

- **people** have to be engaged in a harmonious flow,
- **purpose** has to be clear and commonly owned,
- **possibilities** have to be welcomed and explored
- **processes** have to be in place that enhance the ability of the **people** to implement the **possibilities** chosen to achieve the **purpose**.

This flow of flourishing should be the aspiration of every person who is responsible for the work of your not-for-profit, in every conversation they have.



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