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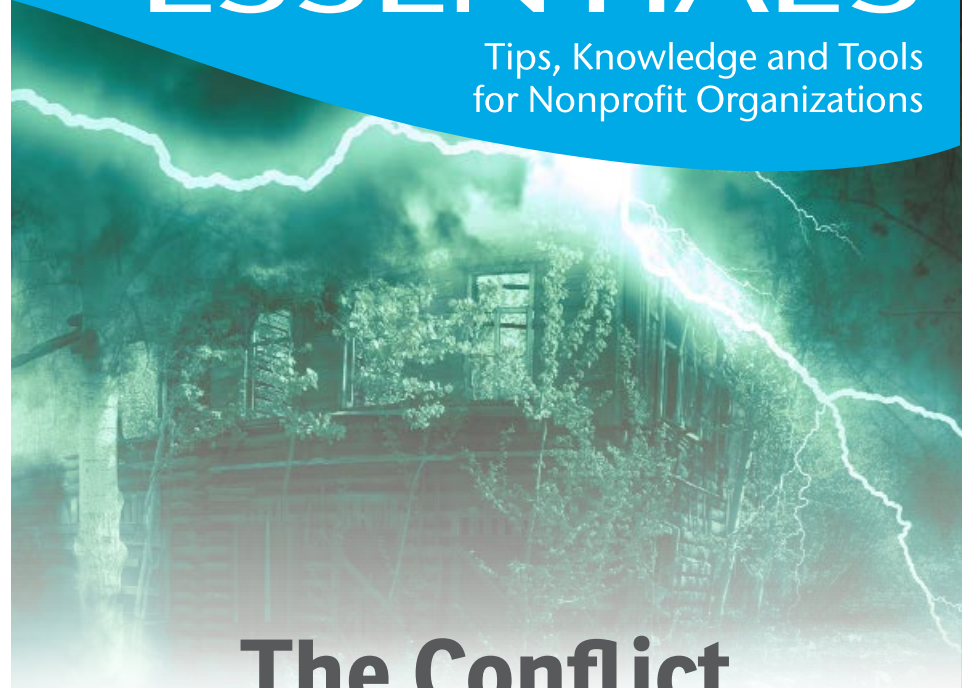
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The Conflict Resolution Issue

Clash of the Nonprofit Titans: Managing Board and CEO Conflicts

By Emily Wilson and Melanie Lockwood Herman

Passion and conflict go hand in hand. As heartfelt passion for an organization's mission is often the selling point that entices people to look for paid and volunteer roles at a nonprofit, it is not surprising that this passion leaves few nonprofit workplaces without conflict. Fortunately for the nonprofit world, conflict in the workplace can be harnessed to cultivate positive,

creative energy leading to innovation and mission-advancing changes in approach.

The seeds of serious trouble may be planted when personal feelings bely passion, and differences in opinion are perceived as personal slights or affronts. Once that line is crossed, there may be little that can be done to revert the relationship back to civility and respect, therefore ending all hope of

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a productive relationship. This tricky problem often arises when it comes to dealing with conflicts between board members and the CEO of a nonprofit, where lines are sometimes blurred when it comes to roles and responsibilities. Essentially, the goal is not to avoid differences of opinion altogether, but rather to plan ahead in order to make disagreements beneficial and productive, rather than unproductive and toxic.

Some of the common causes of conflict between CEOs and board members include:

- *Lack of clarity regarding roles and authority* – For example, is the decision in question one the CEO properly made, or should the board have been consulted? Did the Board Chair exceed her authority by making a decision that has been delegated to the CEO?
- *Personality conflicts* – Instead of naively wishing and hoping that a group of passionate leaders will always get along, a better approach is to anticipate and prepare for inevitable conflict.
- *Inappropriate conduct* – Community-serving missions won't inoculate nonprofits against inappropriate behavior. From workplace bullying to narcissism and turf wars, even nonprofit professionals can get hot under the collar.
- *Crisis events* – The common view that a crisis brings people together is often true in the nonprofit sector, but only when the relationships were strong before

the crisis. Unfortunately, a crisis often intensifies—rather than heals—existing fractures and divisions between boards and CEOs.

Signs of a Conflict Zone

While sometimes it is painfully obvious that a conflict is brewing, other times it creeps up until it eventually explodes—usually at the worst time possible. Though a passive aggressive remark or a suddenly quiet Board member may not seem terribly unusual, either could be a sign of a deeper problem. Understanding the signs of a developing conflict could save your nonprofit from the loss of talented staff or volunteers, or at the very least a highly uncomfortable board meeting.

Common signs that a storm may be brewing include:

- Parties exhibit hostility, or use belittling or passive aggressive behavior towards each other.
- Board members stop volunteering to take on new tasks, and provide less or little input during and in between meetings.
- Absenteeism at board or committee meetings increases.
- The CEO begins to dread or complain about board meetings and other board-related initiatives that she used to look forward to.

Risk Tips for Conflict Management

Unproductive conflict is certainly not always avoidable, but being prepared for it can improve communication and increase the odds that rifts will be mended gently and in a timely fashion.

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Follow the tips below to manage the risk of a toxic conflict erupting between the leaders of your nonprofit.

- *Get it out and get it over* – the sooner warring parties start talking, the sooner the war will be over and your mission will be front and center.
- *Seek common ground* – identify the areas of agreement, before focusing on topics where you disagree.
- *Use nonjudgmental language* – remember that it’s okay to disagree; put all that time you spent watching election-year debates to good use, by remembering to focus on the issues, not the people, their personalities or their personal attributes.
- *Give precise examples of what you need and where you disagree* – for example, “I need reassurance that the board trusts me to manage day-to-day operations,” versus “Once again, you’re meddling in operations!”
- *When appropriate, address issues directly* – if you’re having an ‘issue’ with a certain board member, try to address the issue privately with the board member, versus airing your grievance with the entire board or venting with the board faction you regard as friends.
- *Work on building and growing a positive board/CEO partnership* – remember that great relationships don’t happen overnight, they require care and ‘feeding’ as well as trust and shared experiences.
- *Be open to contrary points of view* – the best board/CEO relationships are strengthened by diverse points

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of view; face it, you'll never be 'right' 100% of the time.

Get Grounded: Simple Rules to Minimize Conflict Risk

One of the most powerful strategies to not only avoid a conflict, but also to boost the productivity of meetings is to establish explicit ground rules. These rules should be developed or reviewed by the board and CEO at the beginning of each year.

Every leader should be invited to contribute suggestions to improve the list of ground rules, such as through wording edits to simplify the message, or through new items. When changes are made, the board should make sure there is consensus and a shared understanding of the intent. Vague references should be avoided! Newly hired or elected leaders should be provided with the ground rules or a Code of Conduct before their very first board meeting.

Some of our favorite ground rules for board meetings include:

- We will start and end all board meetings on time; please do your best to be on time.
- We expect that all board members will read the materials sent in advance of the meeting; the purpose of our meeting is to identify policy needs, review action steps, and surface unique perspectives. Come prepared for a lively discussion!
- Respect your fellow board members and our staff, by staying focused on the topic at hand; to avoid being distracted, turn

off your mobile phone at the beginning of a board meeting.

- Remember your duty to dissent; if you disagree or have a different perspective, don't go along to get along, please share what's on your mind.
- Voting 'yes' when you're feeling 'no' is neglect of your duties as a board member; withholding how you really feel violates your commitment to be candid.
- Respect confidentiality; do not discuss the deliberations of the board outside the boardroom.
- Encourage others on the board to share their thoughts and concerns; do not try to speak for others.
- Keep in mind that differences of opinion often lead to meaningful discussion followed by the best possible decision; even if you think you're right, hang on until we hear from the other brilliant minds around the table.
- Whether you're sharing an opinion, disagreeing with a proposal under consideration, or voting, remember to keep what's best for the nonprofit at the forefront.

Consider designating a member of the board as the custodian of the ground rules. For example, perhaps the Chair of the Board Development or Governance Committee is suited to remind the board when an important ground rule has been violated or overlooked. Or a dynamic Board Chair may prefer to fill that role.

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Conflict Q and A: The Coach's Corner

As conflict resolution often comes down to trial and error, it is helpful to seek advice from those who have seen it all. Emily Wilson invited several experienced leaders to share the wisdom gained from years in the trenches.

Emily Wilson: "What strategies or tactics are you using to minimize the risk of conflict between your Board and CEO?"

Christina Briesacher, President of the Board of Directors of the Domestic Violence Legal Clinic: *"Boards should not try to avoid conflict entirely. If we are truly grappling with the issues facing our agency, and by extension, the issues facing our clients, we will have occasional differences of opinion. The key is to have solid relationships, a common understanding of the mission, and a culture of civil discourse so that we resolve the conflict and unite behind the solution."*

Scott Mazzulla, President and CEO of Hobart Institute of Welding Technology: *"I make it a point to get out and meet with each board member at least once a year for one on one time. It's important to get to know the board outside of the work environment; it builds trust and transparency. It also helps prevent surprises at board meetings; surprises are too often the cause of conflict."*

Margaret R. Duval, Executive Director of the Domestic Violence Legal Clinic: *"Open communication and in-person meetings have helped us avoid unnecessary conflict between members of our governing body. We have members from different cultures, backgrounds and experiences, which could lead to conflict, however we give everyone a chance to share ideas and openly collaborate during meetings, which makes us stronger as an organization."*

Anonymous Board Member: *"I believe one of the best preventative measures is to properly onboard board members. That's where those policies, documents and dashboards become very important. Knowing what your role is as a board member makes you (or at least me) more comfortable speaking up when you have a concern or because something doesn't seem in line with your role."*

EW: "What are your go-to tips for managing the conflicts that are impossible to avoid between the board and the CEO?"

SM: *"When disagreements occur, try to get everyone to agree on the issue at hand, versus taking sides with the personalities around the table."*

Anonymous Board Member: *"Be open. Speaking up about a failure of process is important. If no one says "I don't really understand the issue," or "is this an issue for the board, or CEO?" things get out of hand. It also puts you in a vulnerable situation. It's hard to be the person who feels like they are behind the curve but*

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that person is invaluable. But doing so leads to new, helpful processes, such as evaluations, board committee charters, dashboards, etc.”

For additional information and tips on boards and conflict, see:

- [Enforcing Board Member Responsibilities - www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/Enforcing_Board_Member_Responsibilities.shtml](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/Enforcing_Board_Member_Responsibilities.shtml)
- [Dysfunctional Characters Often Sit at the Board Table - www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/Dysfunctional_Characters_Often_Sit_at_the_Board_Table.shtml](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/Dysfunctional_Characters_Often_Sit_at_the_Board_Table.shtml)
- [Let's Work Together – The Sweet Sounds of a Board-CEO Partnership - www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/Lets_Work_Together.shtml](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/Lets_Work_Together.shtml)
- <http://betterboards.net/relationships/board-ceo-conflict/>

Melanie Herman is executive director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. Emily Wilson is a Center Intern who will complete her final year of studies at George Mason University this May, when she will earn a B.A. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, with a Minor in Nonprofit Studies. Melanie and Emily welcome your questions and feedback at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org and emily2@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504.



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You're looking for specialized risk expertise because:

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- Your Board requested that your organization adopt an Enterprise Risk Management program
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- Custom-built cloud applications that help you achieve your risk management goals and objectives

Case Study

1 Who: A nonprofit culture organization that produces large-scale events

Strategy: To provide risk management and youth protection training to event volunteers

Results: Our work included the delivery of a custom-built online portal featuring courses and resources for volunteers and other stakeholders. To read additional case studies, visit: www.nonprofitrisk.org/consulting%20Services.pdf.



We Can Work It Out: Managing Workplace Disputes

By *Melanie Lockwood Herman*

Few things are more frustrating in the workplace than feeling unheard, especially when it comes to sensitive matters such as interpersonal workplace conflicts. And according to a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, “respectful treatment of all employees at all levels” is the number one contributor to overall job satisfaction. (See www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Documents/2015-Job-Satisfaction-and-Engagement-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf)

Did you know that unaddressed workplace conflicts waste, on average, eight hours of time spent on gossip and other unproductive, mission-draining activities? That calculation was made by Joseph Grenny, co-author of *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When*

Stakes Are High (See “How to Resolve Workplace Conflicts,” *HR Magazine*, Society for Human Resource Management). And other studies show that nonprofit sector employees have especially high expectations of their employers; they not only value fair treatment, they expect it. As stewards of both the mission of the nonprofit and its financial resources, nonprofit leaders arguably have moral, ethical and fiduciary responsibilities to address inevitable conflicts in the workplace.

The Blame Game

The causes of workplace conflict are as diverse as the people who typically work in an organization. They include:

- *Misinterpreted intentions* – Conflicts sometimes arise when

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... a logical first step in reducing the risk of unproductive conflict is to focus on fostering a culture that promotes open communication and healthy, well-managed conflict.

one employee ascribes meaning or intent to the actions of another. From leaving someone off the list of meeting invitees, to assigning a plum project to a new, instead of veteran team member, many staff assume ill intentions lurk behind the possibly innocent actions of their peers or supervisors.

- *Diverse backgrounds* – When colleagues bring different upbringings and life experiences to their work, the potential for creative solutions increases. But the likelihood of conflicting views increases as well.
- *Varied communication styles* – Some team members prefer face-to-face or telephone conversations to ensure clarity around shared goals and the division of labor, while others believe that putting everything in a written email creates a helpful cyber trail of the conversation and commitments.
- *Differing priorities* – It would be a rare day in the life of a nonprofit if everyone on staff was in exact agreement about the priorities for the day, the week, the month or the fiscal year. Add to that differences of opinion about how the nonprofit should spend its financial resources.
- *Lack of trust* – Some staff are naturally trusting, while others wait until a co-worker has earned their trust. Leaders may model trust by giving staff leeway and flexibility to accomplish important projects, or unknowingly dampen trust by micromanaging their direct reports.

While the issues above should create strength that fortifies a nonprofit mission, they too often lead to irreparable breakdowns, missed opportunities to collaborate, and suboptimal workplace morale. Together these issues create a dysfunctional workplace culture.

Collaborative Cultures Reduce Unproductive Conflict

Certainly a collaborative, open culture can help prevent damaging disputes by encouraging nonprofit colleagues to discuss their disagreements directly and productively. So a logical first step in reducing the risk of unproductive conflict is to focus on fostering a culture that promotes open communication and healthy, well-managed conflict. Nurturing a culture that is good but could be better, may feel within reach. But how can leaders fix a culture that is broken or dysfunctional?

The research of Jay W. Lorsch and Emily McTigue at the Harvard Business School suggests that culture isn't something leaders 'fix.' Instead, "cultural change is what you get after you've put new processes or structures in place to tackle tough business challenges... The culture evolves as you do that important work." (See "Culture Is Not the Culprit," *Harvard Business Review*, April 2016.)

Six Strategies to Surmount Conflict

1. **Adopt an open mind—instead of open door—policy.** Although many nonprofit executives tout their 'open door policy,' many open door policies exist in name

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only. Too many execs who boast that their door is always open are perceived as disinterested, disconnected and unavailable by the staff who need really them. Instead of posting or boasting about an open door policy, strive to be the leader everyone wants to speak to. Keep your door—and your mind—truly open. Instead of waiting for staff to cross your office threshold, walk down the hall and across others' thresholds to solicit ideas from everyone on your team.

It's human nature to want to be asked: "What do you think?" Be the learning, growing, evolving leader your mission needs, and not the know-it-all boss who tells people what to do and how to think.

- 2. Invite dissent and teach your team how to disagree respectfully.** The word dissent has an unfair, bad rap. The simple definition is: "holding

opinions at variance with those previously, commonly or officially held." Every nonprofit mission needs the fuel and fire that dissent offers. When everyone is 'on the same page' or of like minds it may feel good, but there's a big chance you're missing an even bigger opportunity. When a staff member dissents in an impolite manner, such as by saying, "that's dumb," give them an immediate chance to rephrase, such as "Wouldn't it be fun if we tried the exact opposite..."

- 3. Model trust by being the most trusting boss.** Parenting experts say that children take their cues from what parents do, and not what they say. Grown up employees are the same. When a boss lives by the values of respect, kindness and trust, don't be surprised when her direct reports do the same. To become the boss who trusts

“Every nonprofit mission needs the fuel and fire that dissent offers. When everyone is 'on the same page' or of like minds it may feel good, but there's a big chance you're missing an even bigger opportunity.”

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and inspires trust, try substituting detailed instructions about how to do something, with guidance and coaching about the important goals of a project. When an employee's efforts fall short, or the team experiences failure, take time to talk about what was learned and how you'll incorporate those lessons in the next project.

4. Never, ever let hurt feelings fester.

Wounded egos and hurt feelings never heal when they are buried or hidden. Feelings soon turn into actions, from ignoring a co-worker to deliberate sabotage. An employee who harbors resentment against others is incapable of doing their best work. No matter how they try, those feelings interfere with everything they do at work, and worse, those feelings accompany them home and may cause medical issues and sleep disturbances.

As a leader, if you sense or hear about hurt feelings in the workplace, bring the parties together without delay. If necessary, explain that disagreeing about a substantive issue may be ok, but professionalism and being kind and respectful are required 100% of the time and it is never acceptable to ignore or sabotage a co-worker.

5. Bring resource-related conflict to the forefront. Jealousy about the allocation of resources is the source of many workplace conflicts. In a recent Center engagement, we heard from some of the staff at our client that resources—including funding, office space and new positions—were unfairly allocated to certain functions. During

our discussion with the senior leadership team, we heard that they were open to making investments throughout the organization, and that the complaining parties simply hadn't made a case for additional resources.

6. Coach, train and repeat. Few employees are naturally equipped to deal with the myriad conflicts that arise in the workplace. And if you've ever witnessed a poorly handled disagreement—employees yelling at each other or being openly disrespectful—it's hard to imagine that was anyone's intent. Just as we learn job skills by doing them, we also need practice to learn how to face up to conflict, nip hurt feelings in the bud, and reach common ground together.

The next time you sense conflict brewing at your nonprofit, bring your team together for a candid chat about nurturing productive dialogue. Your team may love the strategies described above, or they may bring other ideas to the table that better suit the cultural nuances of your nonprofit. Either way, address conflicts directly, in a timely fashion, and with respect to all the minds around the table. Try to 'work it out' like The Beatles, whose sage wisdom reminds us that—though it's tough to resolve conflict—it's far worse to "run the risk of knowing that our love may soon be gone..."

Melanie Herman is executive director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She welcomes your questions and feedback at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504.

Additional Conflict Resolution Resources:

Employee Job Satisfaction Survey, Society for Human Resource Management

"How to Resolve Workplace Conflicts," by Tamara Lytle, *HR Magazine*, SHRM

The Discomfort Zone: How Leaders Turn Difficult Conversations into

Breakthroughs, by Marcia Reynolds (Berrett-Koehler, 2014)

Critical Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler (McGraw-Hill, 2011)



The Dark Side of Leadership

By *Melanie Lockwood Herman and Emily Wilson*

Few nonprofits can thrive or even survive without strong leadership. Yet what happens when forceful leaders cross the line and become bellicose bullies or just plain bad bosses? Sadly, the nonprofit sector is not immune from the harm that destructive leaders leave in their wakes. Destructive leaders are those whose actions cause catastrophic effects on everything from staff morale to workplace safety.

Defining Destructive Leadership

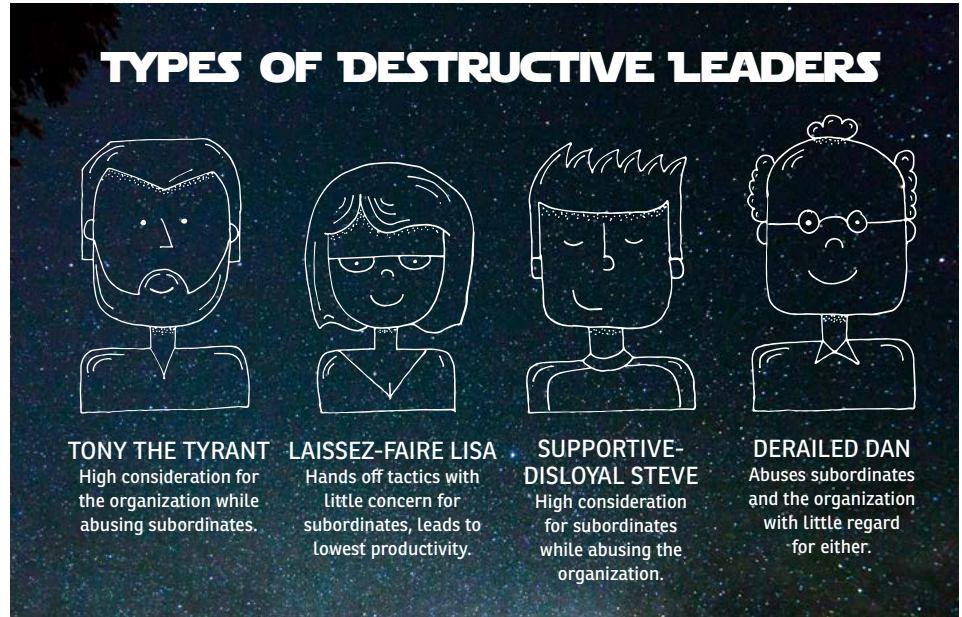
Destructive leadership can come in a variety of forms, such as toxic, abusive, and/or narcissistic leadership and bullying. Although the term is still relatively new and the subject of ongoing study, a widely accepted definition is:

“The systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates.” Source: www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984307000422

Destructive leaders aren’t always easy to spot. Yet their actions can cause harm that permeates a nonprofit’s mission and core objectives, as well as the morale of the ranks of paid and volunteer staff. In some cases, destructive leadership may negatively impact staff without visible impact to the mission of the nonprofit. For example, a narcissistic CEO may be a

“Sadly, the nonprofit sector is not immune from the harm that destructive leaders leave in their wakes. Destructive leaders are those whose actions cause catastrophic effects on everything from staff morale to workplace safety.”

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terrible boss, but an effective fundraiser. Since the board and donors rarely if ever see that CEO's bad behavior, they remain in the dark and unaware.

The Scary Shapes of Destructive Leadership

Diagnosing a leader as destructive is especially difficult if the leader is passive-aggressive or mistreats staff in an indirect fashion. To begin the difficult process of putting an end to destructive leadership, boards need to know what to look for. Here are a few examples of destructive leader personas.

- **Laissez-Faire Leadership** – Although it may be relatively common, laissez-faire leadership is often overlooked. The term refers to leaders who are overly hands-off and unavailable to their direct reports. Although many staff members appreciate the opportunity to step up and be trusted by their bosses, no one wants to be abandoned completely.

What looks like excellent delegation skills to the board may feel like painful neglect to a staff member who needs support, mentoring, and guidance—or who simply desires occasional face-time with the boss. Laissez-faire leaders sap creativity and productivity from their employees, and their staff members often withdraw or experience tension and dissatisfaction.

- **Tyrannical Leadership** – A tyrannical style is unique because it causes irreparable harm to the leader's subordinates, but not necessarily the organization. If you've ever been humiliated, belittled, or manipulated at work, you're familiar with this destructive leadership style. Tyrannical leaders may justify their behavior as part of a driven work style, or ask for forgiveness and offer empty promises to change their behavior. Nonprofits

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led by tyrannical leaders typically suffer costly turnover. Worse, the talents and idealism of staff members who suffer under this leadership style are wasted. Since a tyrannical leader may be deferential to his or her board while meeting financial and program targets, board members may be unaware of the costly damage the leader is causing.

- **Supportive-Disloyal Leadership** – If you’ve seen an episode of “The Office,” you’re familiar with the supportive-disloyal leadership style portrayed by Steve Carell, as Michael Scott, the Regional Manager of Dunder-Mifflin. Supportive-disloyal leaders like Michael Scott show exaggerated interest in the welfare of subordinates, but little to no regard for the interest of the organization. The abuses committed by this type of destructive leader may include stealing, such as the theft of materials, time, or financial resources.
- **Derailed Leadership** – This style of leadership is a dangerously passive form of destructive leadership which can negatively affect both subordinates and the organization. An example would be a leader who regularly humiliates her subordinates and thereby demonstrates anti-subordinate behavior, and who also engages in manipulation or deceit with respect to the organization’s assets, through absenteeism or theft.

The Unacceptable Risks of Destructive Leadership

The leadership styles described above open a Pandora’s Box of dangerous and unacceptable consequences for a nonprofit, its dedicated employee and volunteer teams, and eventually for the destructive leader him/herself. Some of the risky effects of destructive leadership include:

1. **Toxic Culture:** Although the elements may differ, employees know a toxic culture when they are in its midst. And most employees attribute culture dysfunction to the actions or neglect of the nonprofit’s senior leaders. Like toxic substances, the effects of a toxic culture can quickly move from one workstation to another, with no limits.
2. **Post-Traumatic Stress, Depression, and Emotional Exhaustion:** According to OfficeVibe, American companies spend an estimated \$360 Billion each year in health care costs as a result of bad bosses. And 44% of employees report that they have been verbally, emotionally, or physically abused by a supervisor during their career. Wellness should be a sincere goal, not a joke. Providing healthy snacks will be of little benefit to overall employee health if employees are subjected to ridicule, tantrums, or unhealthy workloads. Source: www.OfficeVibe.com
3. **Absenteeism and Low Productivity:** According to StackHands, unhappy employees take 15 more sick days each year than the average worker, and are 10% less productive.
4. **Costly Turnover:** StackHands also

THE RISKY EFFECTS

American companies spend on estimated **\$360 billion** each year in health care costs as a result of **bad bosses.**

Source: Officevibe.com

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reports that 75% of people voluntarily leaving aren't quitting their jobs, they are quitting their bosses!

- 5. Increased Workplace Conflict and Tension:** Peers and camaraderie are the #1 reason employees go the extra mile—not money. Source: www.StackHands.com

Defusing Destructive Leaders

Realizing that a leader on your nonprofit's payroll is destructive is the easy part; the real challenge is figuring out what to do about it.

DO...

- 1. Try and have a conversation with the leader.** Civilly explain exactly what you need in terms of direction, feedback, or support. Clearly and precisely outline the information that you want to gain—or the objectives that you want to achieve—from the conversation.
- 2. If confronting the leader doesn't work, consider going to the leader's manager to ask for assistance.** Proceed with caution, however, as this may fuel the leader's fire and lead to greater animosity aimed at you. Although gossiping about a bad boss is rarely productive, in some cases, going with a group to share different views about the same bad behavior may be necessary, either in a direct conversation with the bad boss, or with his or her manager.
- 3. Keep in mind the position of the destructive leader, and plan accordingly.** Your plan of action should be different depending on if you are dealing with your CEO verses a Board Member or

Volunteer Supervisor. For example, if the destructive leader is not your direct supervisor, it may be better to speak to the head of HR, or another senior manager.

DON'T...

- 1. Simply tell the boss that he or she is being destructive.** Not only will this cause even more tension in the workplace, but it may even make the situation more toxic. Instead, try to approach the conversation with positive, team-centric goals in mind.
- 2. Have the conversation with your leader while she is already on a tangent or in a bad mood.** Make sure to wait for a moment of calm so that the conversation can be as civil as possible. The last thing you want to do is create an unnecessary conflict because of bad timing.
- 3. Let the leader get away with abusive behavior such as yelling or direct aggression.** As soon as there is a private moment after the conflict has deescalated, draw attention to the behavior and clarify to the leader that you do not feel comfortable with it.

Additional Risk Tips/ Preventative Measures

- 1. Gauge employee sentiments.** There are a variety of online tools and apps available to employers who want to measure employee happiness. Options include the "Smiley Terminals and Reporting Service" provided by happiness experts Happy or Not (www.happy-or-not.com/en), or MoodApp (www.moodapp.mobi/), which measures how employees are feeling at the workplace, or the

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anonymous reporting and comment software offered by OfficeVibe. Or invite staff to take the “How Awesome is Your Office” survey created by SnackNation (www.snacknation.com/blog/how-awesome-is-your-office).

2. **Track employee turnover and absenteeism.** What causes most voluntary turnover? Does absenteeism correlate with specific company events or days that the boss is scheduled to be in the office? If these patterns appear in your nonprofit, the problem is internal and fixable.
3. **Listen to your employees,** care about what they have to say, and demonstrate that care by providing multiple outlets for providing honest (and anonymous) feedback.
4. **Always conduct exit interviews with departing staff and long-term volunteers.** Exit interviews provide an opportunity to express appreciation to the departing team member, as well as a chance for the individual to reflect on the quality of leadership and supervision they received, the degree to which their talents were used, and whether they witnessed or experienced any illegal harassment, discrimination, or other forms of destructive leadership. For additional information on the topic of exit interviews, see “Closing Time: Effective Exit Interviews,” *Risk eNews*, www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/enews/2016/enews020316.html.
5. **Resolve to improve employee engagement.** Whether it’s through special outings to celebrate personal and team ‘wins,’ giving employees ‘inside’ information—

such as changes in direction being considered by the board or the top challenges facing the nonprofit, the success of your nonprofit is inextricably tied to employee engagement. Moving off-site is great way to celebrate, because it gives employees a break from their email inboxes, long to-do lists, and normal duties, thereby enabling them to celebrate an important victory or milestone, welcome a new team member, or just pause to build trust and camaraderie. To view or download a list of 59 cool and kooky ideas to boost employee engagement, visit: www.snacknation.com/blog/employee-engagement-ideas/.

Simon Sinek, the author who popularized the concepts “the golden circle” and “Start With Why,” reminds us that, “Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.” Both destructive and great leaders all have something in common—room for improvement. Whether your nonprofit’s leaders are inspirational and award-winning, or dastardly and deserving of discipline, you and your colleagues can help them grow into leaders worthy of tomorrow.

Melanie Herman is executive director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. Emily Wilson is a Center Intern who will complete her final year of studies at George Mason University this May, when she will earn a B.A. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, with a Minor in Nonprofit Studies. Melanie and Emily welcome your questions and feedback at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org and emily2@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504.

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