

PEER REAL-TIME CONSULTING SESSION

Fellow Name: Bharati Chaturvedi

Country: India

Organization Name: Chintan

Challenge

- To Identify growth opportunities and strategic planning
- To create new leadership and for me to move on in 3 years
- To re-work the image of Chintan as working with waste pickers to working on urban green justice.

Specific question(s) (not more than two) you are looking to answer during the advising session:

- What are the 3 key actions I must take each to find new leadership both personally and organizationally?
- What are the key new areas to work in order to expand and grow?

Current Situation & Background of organization

- It's been 9 years of the same work, and while we are well known for it, I am tired of only this.
- No institutional grants, we have to understand why. Could it be that we have not asked correctly or we are not seen as worthy of being investable?
- We have good media and global peer credibility.
- We need about 2-3 years to actually reach peak achievements in some programmes, but after that, what? Want to plan now and explore other related issues I care about.
- Producing knowledge is a definite strength we have.

Issues to Keep in mind

- Overdue or even, time to move the foundation out of the establishment phase into growth.
- Charge the incoming Chief Executive with clear goals and targets in the next 2-3 years
- My organisation's internal operating environment is under pressure and demanding.
- Lots of new private, for profit players in our field, we have to compete as well as be different and smarter

Requested Advisor Skills/Knowledge

- They should have some experience of expanding and institutional building
- Someone who is either a donor or was a donor will offer a useful perspective
- Ideal to include those who have headed and handed over leadership successfully in small to medium organizations

Conclusions and highlights from the discussion

The discussion was broken up into two components-the strategic plan and the issue of Bharati's own role in Chintan in the next 3 years. The latter was the focus of the discussion. The main points were as below :

I. The Issue of the next COO

The current COO has resigned and the new one has to be hired. Many believed this was an opportunity for Chintan to take a leap and for some aspects of a possible new CEO to emerge. Key points:

- In Chinese the word crisis is always used with the word opportunity.
- Write a new job description, working with your board that includes (a) essential CEO roles (b) new directions -- do you need a person who knows more about communication, or whatever new direction you are moving in and then prepare to be surprised
- Not everyone will have the entire skills set, but if you were clear about what were the most important skills, then the rest you can train the person in over the 3 years. So you are looking not only for a COO but eventually for a CEO.
- This is also important because it enables institutional continuity. Part of institutional capacity is not to be overly dependent on any individuals for its daily operations
- One should not be dismayed with how people respond. People respond to change really differently. People who work in social change organizations like change as much as other people -- it makes them nervous, excited, hopeful, distressed. You just have to stay on course and everyone will develop together
- When the founding director is ready to leave for staff to be creative, internal talents blossom.
- The good thing for the new COO is coming into an organization that is rethinking itself -- gives that person more ownership and exposure to the entire organization and its history than might ordinarily be the case.
- Also an opportunity to make an inventory of skills that exist and determine what you are still missing, and look for that--or decide who can develop those skills fastest
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II. Bharati's role

- Given Bharati's personal 3 year time frame, it might be important to begin the planning process with the board, the current staff and the wastepickers, to identify what Chintan should be heading toward, and identify the gaps in skills, and hire them
- For the transition Bharati's new role is to lead a strategic planning process, raise money, build capacity, and over the next three years, test out new partnerships.
- In terms of content, Bharati should begin to think of new ideas in the environmental justice field and try out a few new things.
- Serve as the public face of Chintan

- If you founded the organization, then you're part of Chintan in one way or another. Remaining connected is itself an important message to both the staff and funders and the communities you've worked hard to serve.

Next steps

- Bharati to develop the JD of the next COO (to be hired) with the idea of leadership and key skills that are required to take the organization ahead
- Bharati to identify her own JD
- Bharati to work with team and others to create a strategic plan which looks at leadership and content
- Bharati to make a 6 month plan and share with peer consultants.