



5 Teambuilding Tips for Nonprofits



You want to make a difference in your community and the world, and the right team will help you achieve this.

Every nonprofit organization faces challenges when developing a management team. The typical challenges might include tight budgets and short staffing. Even in the face of all that, your group is willing to collaborate with each other to achieve important goals. Help them succeed by managing them in a way that encourages their productivity. The tips we share will help you maximize that synergy; but first, let's examine...

What drives effective nonprofit management teams

These groups are usually led by senior department managers who report to the executive director. These individuals do more than that, though. For example, a social service provider's key functions might include counseling, housing, and other client support duties. An effective management team is a coalition of these leaders who make informed, organization-wide decisions. With these team members as your base, use these tools to help guide your team:

1. Practice effective team management
2. Focus on the what's important
3. Put the best people in the best places
4. Use best practices to stay on track
5. Encourage communication and team dynamics

1. Practice effective team management

The executive director or CEO has the ultimate authority of managing the operations of the organization. In most cases, this person serves as the reporting contact for each of the department leaders. To effectively manage their team, the CEO must do the following:

- Define expectations
- Set agendas

- Clearly communicate which decisions will be made by department leaders
- Communicate which decisions need team consensus

For nonprofits, consensus building is critical in determining successful strategy changes. The “tone at the top” emphasizes the organization’s mission and values. Respecting members’ input and initiative encourages them to invest in their roles.

2. Focus on what is important

The management team does not need to deal with – or in some cases, be informed of – every issue the organization faces. Department-specific duties are usually addressed by those responsible for overseeing certain tasks. Program issues are best resolved by the specific director and their team. For example, the finance team should handle accounting and audit questions while fundraising efforts are handled by the development team. When determining what to focus on, consider these two important questions:

1. Do the decisions involve multiple departments?
2. What are the issues that have the highest stakes?

For example, the introduction of a new computer system would impact the organization. And a conversation on financial sustainability should have perspectives from many departments.

3. “Have your aces in their places”

In other words, make sure you place each team member in the positions best suited for them. Anyone you choose should be a subject matter expert in their respective field. They also must have a deep appreciation for the organization and its mission. Their knowledge and experience help them develop a “big-picture” look at the issues.

Diversity is also a critical consideration because it helps represent the various constituencies of your organization. It also brings different perspectives to the discussion. When assigning these roles, it might get difficult to find a balance for the size of the team. It should not be so small that it excludes necessary expertise, but it can’t be so large that meetings could become time-consuming and unproductive. The solution is to create smaller teams with specific responsibilities.

4. Use best practices to stay on track

Your organization’s meeting and communication processes are the cornerstones of effective leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic showed us that well-planned virtual meetings can be effective. That said, there are limitations to this approach, and the dynamics are different from in-person gatherings. You can overcome any challenges by planning meetings with a clear goal in mind. It is also helpful to provide materials ahead of time to keep conversations productive. For updates and other items that need more discussion, it might be best to address those in shorter catch-up meetings.

You need more time for strategic planning meetings and implementing new programs or processes. These are often done in meetings divided into digestible segments of topics. Holding meetings outside the normal workspace and allowing time for personal interaction encourages collaboration and openness.

5. Encourage communication and team dynamics

If you want effective meetings, host frank and open discussions of anything that needs to be resolved. Follow this with a decision and implementation plan for next steps. For all this to happen, the participants need to trust each other and understand that different management styles can work on a collaborative basis.

Some managers might be “conflict-averse,” which could make them reluctant to express opposing views. These challenges rob your organization of opportunities to share different viewpoints and address questions that present a broader picture. To create a culture that supports this communication baseline, treat everyone with respect, listen, and express disagreement thoughtfully and tactfully.

Nonprofits accomplish more through effective strategies

UHY is happy to offer these tips for nonprofits. We have plenty of experience providing audit, tax, and advisory [services for not-for-profit organizations](#). This includes ensuring quality accounting information and compliance with regulatory standards, as well as contracting issues, donor restrictions, and other industry concerns. Our passion for client service shows in our continuing commitment to community organizations just like yours. If you would like to learn more about how UHY can help your organization, call us at 866-933-3099 or fill out the form below and send it to us.

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