

Tom Little's

BIG IDEAS

for Non-Profits

In This Edition

December 14 to 18, 2020

Diversity And Inclusion – What it Takes

More on how to ensure your organization is diverse and inclusive.

Emails... We Get Emails

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Touching life lessons from the Alberta teenager who won the Breakthrough Junior Challenge and a \$250,000 US scholarship.

Orientation of New Staff A “Must”

What is most important for new staff to know must be imparted immediately on hire.

At CMCS, COVID means we Zoom more and travel less. Our work, including strategic planning, Board training and executive recruitment goes on. All continues to be possible.

Diversity and Inclusion – What it Takes

The Story

In last week's BIG Ideas newsletter, I discussed the need for a policy on diversity and inclusion, ending the article with this statement: "The proof is always in the pudding, so having a policy is only the first step."

A number of BIG Ideas readers commented on the article. Roz Werner-Arce went further. Roz wrote: "In this season of giving, I'm sharing a recent article I came across today that may be helpful to you in your work someday. Although the title refers to conferences, the article itself speaks to diversity and inclusion in a broader perspective."

The article was titled: *How to Build an Inclusive Conference Environment* (CD - Meeting Mentor Magazine, Dec 2020). Here are some of the key points it made. Thanks to Reader Roz getting into the spirit of the season and passing it on.

The Skinny

According to the article, welcoming diversity and inclusion:

1. Requires commitment.

"It should align with your personal values and also the business case."

2. Goes beyond putting out a statement.

"Consider reassessing everything through the lens of organizational biases."

3. Takes courage and being aware of your own biases.

"It's vital to recognize our own biases, to understand our own limitations, before trying to tackle inclusivity. And that goes for the organizational biases as well as the individual's. A key question to dig into: *How are we as an organization structured to benefit one group more than another?* Courage then comes into play as individuals and organizations lean into fixing those biases."

4. Calls for curiosity.

"It's about having an open mindset and being willing to better understand how others experience the world."

5. Requires cultural intelligence.

"Also known as cultural quotient (CQ), this is the ability to relate and work effectively across cultures — which is only possible when the person or organization recognizes and understand the biases, including unconscious biases, that may be warping understanding of other cultures. And 'culture' can be anything that shapes and defines how someone thinks, behaves, makes choices, and defines as "normal," from place of origin to generation to race to profession to political orientation...."

6. Involves collaboration

“Just like Gen Z votes with their dollars, so does your organization when it chooses which vendors to work with.”

7. Works by building bridges, not walls

“We need to find ways to not feel uncomfortable with asking the uncomfortable questions, such as the gender pronoun someone wants to be addressed by...and don't forget that the conversation is not a one-and-done deal, but a continual discourse. It starts with acknowledging that there's a problem. Then start the conversation, knowing that your main role is to be the listener so you can gain perspective on the real lived experience of those in other groups. Then educate yourself, and take a bold outward stance to leverage your privilege in support of the marginalized group you are being an ally to.”

8. Requires evaluation and change

“And don't forget to measure the results and adjust accordingly.”

The BIG Idea

My BIG Idea for this week is to combine the lessons in the articles from last week and this, and move forward with your own efforts at ensuring diversity and inclusion.

Emails... We Get Emails

A Reader Adds to the Discussion of Diversity and Inclusion

BIG Ideas reader Chris Grayson offered up this story in response to the diversity and inclusion theme in last week's newsletter. His is about a person with an intellectual disability named Jason Rae and Jason's achievements:

“Interesting article.

I am not 100% certain in the year, 2002 and or maybe 2001 that Jason Rae joined the board of directors at Community Living Campbellford Brighton with full support of the remaining board. His goal was clear, not only to make the board more inclusive, his own goal was to run for the role of board president. He did and in his first of two terms, supported me and my team to our second accreditation with distinction in 2003 and a National Donner Award.

I would love to see Jason referenced in a link to that article. Jason not only changed his life, he impacted many including me. Did you know he passed suddenly 5 years back?

I launched after that, the Jason Rae Leadership Award and personally provide \$1,000.00 a year to a bursary given out at the annual Community Living Ontario conference.”

You can find more about Jason Rae at:

<https://www.communitylivingupperottawavalley.ca/resources/jason-rae/>

Reader Chris finishes with this admonition to the two new Executive Directors also referenced in last week's newsletter: *"Just a reminder to those two or three new ED's that requested planning support to also consider planning to make inclusion a fabric of theirs culture and good things will happen."*

This Week's TomBit

"There's a Small Chance We Can Defy Expectations and Breach Barriers".

"Winning the Breakthrough Junior Challenge is something life-changing and I am so honoured to win this for my school, my teachers, my family, the city, and the country. I can't wait for the new opportunity students in our community will have with the new lab at McTavish and the love and awe for science that will be fostered here."

So said Maryam Tsegaye, who I wrote about in last week's BIG Ideas newsletter. She is the seventeen year old Alberta student who won a \$250,000 US scholarship for her three minute video on quantum tunnelling, a phenomenon involving some of the smallest particles science has identified. Accompanying the prize is \$100,000 US to build a new science lab at her high school.

There is more to Maryam's story and we can learn from it.

Look closely at how she ends her video: she says: "Maybe the quantum world is telling us that, when faced with an obstacle, there's a small chance we can defy expectations and breach barriers".

This is a touching metaphor and extends her message far beyond the science of quantum mechanics. It encompasses Maryam's colour, which is Black, her family background, Ethiopian, her gender, female, her domicile, Fort McMurray and her interest, physics.

For Maryam Tsegaye the future is bright. It's easy to envision her attending CalTech in Pasadena, California, the small university that is home to so many Nobel Prize winners for physics and that has been made famous by the TV show The Big Bang Theory. She will then go on to enjoy a long and successful career in cosmic research, extending our understanding of a Universe that poses so many questions and for which to date we have so few answers. In the process she will become an important and inspiring role model for all those of similar background, intellect and aspiration. Only Sheldon is likely to be less than impressed.

Maryam Tsegaye is that sub-atomic particle that makes it through the barrier and reaches the other side. For that, especially in this crazy world that has been 2020, we can all take heart.

Editor's Note: If you need a little pick-me-up today, watch this video made by the Breakthrough Junior Challenge on how Maryam found out about winning the prize, her friends' reaction and then how she told her dad. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3JMup78ha8> Warning: Tears may flow!

Blast from the Past

Blast from the Past is a selection of previous BIG Ideas articles that you may not have read, or if you did, may have forgotten how helpful and insightful (i.e. brilliantly written) they were. This article is from 2016.

Orientation of New Staff A “Must”

The Story

Last week we talked about the cost of not filling vacant staff positions quickly. Those costs included reduced service quality and stress on those having to find a way to fill the gap.

This week I am going to continue with the human resource theme, by sharing a shortcoming often revealed to my colleague Nancy Mouldsdale and I when we work with organizations on planning: the failure to provide a comprehensive orientation for new staff.

The Skinny

This is not surprising, given that funding is always an issue for non-profits, and the HR function generally does not receive the priority it deserves, because the organization has other priorities. But you only get one chance to truly inculcate new employees with what is important about the organization, and that is right in the beginning. So whatever is critical for them to know needs to be communicated right off the bat.

For example, they need to know your vision, mission and values. If you are part of a human service organization, and your vision for the people you serve is: “A Meaningful Life: Relationships, Community, Wellbeing”, as it is for York Support Services Network, then your employees must be aware from the first day that their goal is “a meaningful life”.

The same applies for your mission. It might be:

“On behalf of, and in partnership with, the people of Atikokan and the surrounding area, working to create an environment that results in improved business and employment opportunities and quality communities in which to enjoy life”, as it is for the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation.

For AEDC, new hires must immediately understand that they are there to improve business and employment opportunities and help create quality communities.

Just as important are the values of the organization. These can apply to the people the organization serves, but they can also apply to the people employed by the organization. Two of my favourite values come from friend and colleague Val Loughheed, founder of Northern Lights Canada, now called Agilec.

Her company, Val would explain, has two rules for employees:

Rule #1: Use your best judgement in all situations.

Rule #2: There will be no other rules.

If you were joining Agilec, you would want to know those rules from the beginning, and you would need to know them from the beginning too, because they tell you so much about the organization and what will be expected of you. It is possible you might conclude the Agilec wasn't for you, because you weren't comfortable with a minimal amount of direction and supervision. If so, better to know before you go further down the road. But if you thrive on independence, you could take comfort that you had licence to proceed, and that you would be supported when you did, so Agilec would be the right place for you.

Greg Bechard, Executive Director at Elmira District Community Living has a strong commitment to his association's staff. Part of his approach to orientation is that he spends half a day on his own with all new hires, in a group, explaining the history of the organization, its services and its plans for the future. He stresses that EDCL is committed to being innovative, and speaks about some of its successes, including in the area of housing.

I know this makes a strong impression on new staff, because after Greg is done in the morning, I spend an afternoon with them talking about the bigger picture of developmental services in Ontario and where EDCL fits. We both stress the importance and value of staff. At the end of my time with them, I do a wrap-up that includes asking what they learned. New staff inevitably reference the pioneering work of EDCL as something they didn't know and were really pleased to have been made aware of. It makes them proud of the organization they work for and, I am guessing, motivates them in their day to day work. Although not mentioned as often, the message that staff are valued also resonates.

The BIG Idea

So my BIG Idea for this week is to ensure your organization includes a comprehensive orientation in its HR practices. Make a list of what you believe is absolutely critical for new employees to know, and stress those points in the orientation process. Here we are talking the big picture: why it exists, what is unique about it, what it values and what its plans are for the future. Link new staff to what the organization hopes to achieve and reinforce their importance as staff and the esteem in which they are held. If you are the Executive Director, be present while the orientation is being held. Make sure that you know your new employees and that they know you. The personal aspect of the orientation process will stand you in good stead for the length of each person's tenure with the organization.

Current CMCS Clients

We are pleased to be working with York Region Centre for Community Safety, Community Living Thunder Bay, Canopy Support Services (formerly Tri-County Community Support Services), Community Living Port Colborne-Wainfleet, Community Visions and Networking (Quinte), Chatham-Kent Family Health Team and Community Living St. Catharines. Recent clientele includes Literacy Network Northeast, Durham Youth Services, Community Living Trent Highlands and Mill Creek Care Centre.

About Tom Little and Nancy Collins



Tom Little and Nancy Collins are the principals of CMCS.

In addition to consulting for many years, Tom has been Executive Director of a large human service organization, experience he brings to the table when working with his non-profit clients. In his younger days he was lucky enough to be part of three Canadian champion hockey teams while attending the University of Toronto.

Nancy's background includes a degree from Wilfrid Laurier and working at a downtown Toronto law firm. In her spare time, at least when there is no pandemic, she plays goal in women's hockey and catcher in summer slo-pitch. A life-long Leafs fan, she no longer apologizes for her unwavering commitment, given their resurrection in recent years. Now if they could just win a playoff round!



Testimonials

On behalf the Board of Directors, we would like to thank you very much for facilitating the work of creating a new strategic plan for our network. It was a pleasure to work with you and everything flowed smoothly. It is great to have this project complete! I hope we will get the opportunity to work together again in the future. Rita Delaurier, Executive Director, Literacy Network Northeast

Thank you so much (for your Board training)! Looking forward to the notes and your presentation was very well received! Lots of growth happening with the board and you helped steer more of that in the right direction. Really enjoy working with you and will keep you in mind for my other boards. Natasha Cosulich Vemb, Board of Directors, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarington

Thank you again to you and Nancy for all the work, dedication and effort put into this Operations Review. We made the right choice in hiring you to do this project and on behalf of the board of directors, I express our deep gratitude. Roz Werner-Arce, Board Chair, Durham Youth Services

Our Strategic Plan is moving along better than I could have imagined. I chair the group of around 20 Board and staff who have been meeting monthly for the past 6 months and plan to continue through the fall. Great enthusiasm from all involved and much is being accomplished already, particularly on renewed focus on our Mission and Vision. Thanks again for getting us off on the right foot! Frank Moore, Board Chair, Community Living Central Huron

Free Resources From CMCS

We offer a range of free resources to help non-profits be better. For your copy, contact us at info@cmcsconsulting.ca

Board Duties
Policy Board Model
Board Meeting Minutes
Board Decision-Making Checklist
Board Evaluation Form
Dealing with Risk
List of Possible Board Policies
Board Recruitment (Stop the BIG LIE)
Management Principles
Member and Director Qualifications
The Importance of Planning
Canada's Great Non-Profit Websites
Transitioning to the New Not-for-Profit Corporations Act

Tom's Book For Boards of Directors



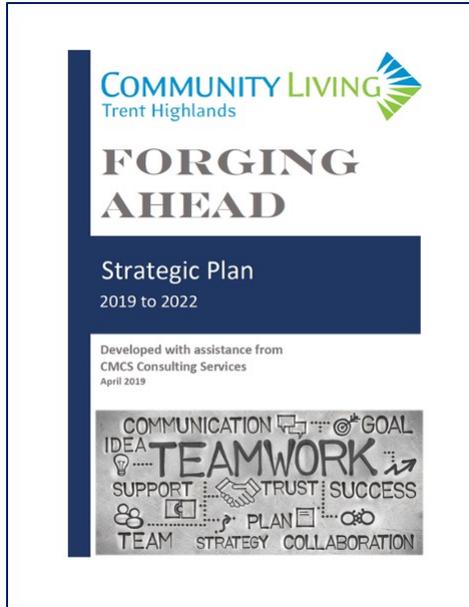
One hundred and ninety-pages. Thirty-six *BIG Ideas*. Thirteen of them are *The BIGGEST of the BIG*, ideas Tom's experience says are critical to any non-profit. Then come twenty-three *BIG Ideas*, more ways to enhance the governance of your organization.

You don't just get ideas either. The book contains all kinds of resources for implementing them. For example, *BIG Ideas* includes samples of strategic and Board yearly action plans, and of evaluation formats Boards can use to rate their own work.

Tom Little's BIG Ideas is formatted as a work book, so it can be used on a continuous basis by the Directors. It is easy to read and has a fun quality your Board members will appreciate.

Just \$40 plus HST and shipping. For your copy, contact us at info@cmcsconsulting.ca.

More About CMCS



At CMCS, our specialty is strategic planning. Since the start of 2018, the following 14 organizations have completed their strategic plans with help from CMCS:

- Kenora Association for Community Living
- Community Living Dryden-Sioux Lookout
- Community Living Trent Highlands
- Elmira District Community Living
- Literacy Northwest
- Durham Region Child Care Forum
- Tollendale Village
- Centennial College School of Transportation
- York Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee
- Autism Home Base Durham
- Canoe FM Community Radio
- Toronto Island Residential Community Trust
- York Region Centre for Community Safety
- Literacy Network Northeast

We provide Board training that comes with a bonus: A Board action plan developed by participants based on the discussion.

Tom wrote his book for non-profit Boards, which you can buy and use as an ongoing resource. We are great facilitators and can help develop agendas for Board and management retreats.

Much of our past work has been in the human service sector, especially disability. But we have assisted in other sectors such as community colleges, local workforce authorities, family health teams, Big Brothers Big Sisters, United Ways and violence against women. We have even assisted a community radio station.

We have built our reputation on producing quality products that have great content and are appealing to look at.