**Building a Culture of Philanthropy: Choose Abundance**

Video Transcript

Sarah Eisinger: Hi, everybody. It's great to see you all this afternoon. My name is Sarah Eisinger, I am the director of JCamp 180 and I'm very delighted to welcome you to this conversation this afternoon with Laurie Herrick and Mark Shapiro on how to build a Culture of Philanthropy within your camping organization. We are rooting this conversation this afternoon in a new report that JCamp 180 commissioned from Sea Change Strategies, which is a third party consulting firm that works on all areas of fundraising and development and who've been champions of the work around building a Culture of Philanthropy. We'll tell you a little bit more about how we are thinking about what a Culture of Philanthropy is.

Last year, we asked them to assess the impacts of JCamp 180's professional development program, the GIFT Leadership Institute, which is led by Laurie Herrick. We released the report in early spring, you may have seen it, and were pleased with the results. This report tracked three cohorts of camps that participated in JCamp 180's GIFT Leadership Institute, totaling 18 organizations. And I want to share some of the high level highlights that we found in the report. By engaging in this work to build their Culture of Philanthropy, the camps saw a number of impacts in a few key areas, most telling they had increased revenues. They had broad sharing of the work to increase revenues across the organization. There was more engagement of board members, alumni, and other volunteers, and there were some organizational structural changes.

**What is a Culture of Philanthropy?**

Laurie Herrick: The phrase a Culture of Philanthropy has been thrown around a lot in the not-for-profit field, but not many resources and tools are available that really show us how do we build that within our organization. So it's an organization-wide focus on attitudes, actions, and structures. And so, what we do is we now approach all three of those things with a team. And that's been the big breakthrough that has occurred in the GIFT Leadership Institute. And Mark was a key piece of that breakthrough and the foundation allowing this to happen was a big breakthrough.

**How did the Milwaukee JCC get started?**

Mark Shapiro: We realized that what was wrong was none of our staff knew how to do the ask. And if we could coach them and teach them how do you ask for money, then that would work. So we decided we'd make an investment in this and we'd do a big training. We were at a conference, we saw a woman who I think is fantastic, her name's Laura Fredricks, and she wrote a book called *The Ask*, and we brought her in and then we realized all we were trying to do was coach people on how to do the one thing that they were petrified of and they hated the most. And it failed miserably. I mean, everyone loved this session and Laura was great, and not one person wanted to ask anybody for money. And that was when we started to realize that this was never going to work if it was about asking people for money.

Now, at the time, our FRD staff had been a part of the GIFT program and it became more or less a groundswell of everyone telling me about Laurie and talking about Lynne Twist and *The Soul of Money*, and that what this needed to be was a culture change. Laurie came to Milwaukee and started to get our lay leaders to talk about why they did what they did, what was their journey, what was important. She did a group exploratory meeting. And none of us knew what was happening, we just knew that something was happening. And that was that first moment that the culture started to change, that this had nothing to do with money and everything to do with finding out what brings joy in people's lives and then letting them make an investment in the thing that gives them joy.

It really is about how do you get people to choose abundance versus the fact that every morning, the world is conspiring to make us think in a scarcity mindset every day. So the most important thing I did was, quite frankly, I listened to the staff who had a much better idea. The single most important thing, in my opinion, to culture change is shared language. So that was the biggest thing for us, was to start boiling the entire process down to what does a Culture of Philanthropy mean, about choosing abundance, about the concept of asking our donors to be thought of as investors that have the right to have an expectation on their return on investment.

And by the way, let me be clear, we've been doing this for, Laurie, seven years since you came here, six, seven years. And it's still not done. I mean, it's constantly evolving. But most importantly is, you get new staff who come in now you have to introduce them to the new language and you have to keep training and building on it. And that was kind of that next step for us, was beginning to introduce. And then finding the people who are most excited about it because there's nothing better than the most excited person being the one who makes the presentation about it.

**How does a Culture of Philanthropy manifest itself with board members?**

Sarah Eisinger: Tell us about your lay leadership. What transformations did you see with those folks?

Mark Shapiro: We got them to agree to go to GLI. And that was what it was, was that when you go through the intensive and they get on group calls with other laypeople from around the country and they realize that they're not alone and people have great ideas and that other people are struggling, and that immersive experience of going away for that first weekend and then they became the next round of proselytizers. And by the way, we never ever, ever, ever asked anyone to ask someone for money. Then we started teaching people that if they were ready to go out and solicit somebody, that they had to be okay with failing and that we were, and then we got people to stop thinking they were asking people for money.

And the big shift, when do you know it is when you can look at somebody and they genuinely believe they're walking into a room to give the person they're meeting with the chance to do something that's going to make them feel freaking awesome and not that you're walking into the room to take money away from them to do what you need. It takes a long time to get to a point when you're hoping to solicit someone for a million dollars, that you don't feel like you're asking someone for a million dollars, it takes a long time to get to that point where you're walking in and you actually already know enough that you know that person's about to feel awesome about themselves if they choose to invest a million dollars.

Laurie Herrick: We talk about the five points of possibility and the number five one is that every gift of time, money, an item, a firsthand experience are all considered philanthropic and that we honor them as such. And that's a really big deal for a lot of lay leaders, is that they start to recognize that doing something like sharing mission moments that they hear from the staff, and for the staff to understand, if they're program staff, that one aspect of where they can participate in a culture of philanthropy is by sharing those firsthand stories of the amazing things that happened to kids that are in their program.

The other thing is for lay leaders is to start to see what are the different gifts, or I like to say superpowers, of the individual board members that they can bring to their role. So it might be that one person, like I have a friend who does this, she makes beautiful postcards and she says, "I would love to do stewardship by writing really meaningful notes to those who have invested in our work." So it's really about teams of people, each one finding their own superpower. For some people it might be asking, but there's so many other things to do that we can't even imagine, that we get rid of the cookie cutter effect of, "Let's go to the board and have them all open up their Rolodex and give us their contacts.” That might work for one person, but there are all these other things that people could bring to the party that could really help to foster a culture that really brings philanthropy up and has people see love of humankind.

**Building your team, building your culture**

If you're having trouble around development and there's not a lot of buy-in around development and then you hire a development person, it's not necessarily going to work. Especially if everyone's holding their nose and saying, "Oh, that necessity, I want nothing to do with it. You know, it's terrible. Phew. Now we have someone who is going to do that. Right?"

Well, I'll tell you, if the mindset is such that fundraising is bad, money's bad, people who do fundraising shouldn't be a part of our programs. Let's just let 'em go get that ugly job done for us. That means most likely they don't have the resources they need to do their job, right? They probably don't have a great database if they do have a database. This is now structures, right? They don't have the structures in place to have success or the executive director or camp director or CEO wants nothing to do with fundraising. So they're not brought in with the other chiefs and aren't really looking at the big picture.

So if you don't have one of those three, it's not going to work out. And specifically what I'd say is, if you've been struggling with putting a structure in place or behavior in place and it's not working, it's most likely that the hearts and minds isn't behind it. So in fundraising, if it's an evil necessity, then most likely no matter how many times you try with the structures and behaviors without addressing and talking about the dysfunctional mindset and building one that's more aligned with a culture that fosters philanthropy, then you've got a much better setup and more success. And that's what we've seen.

Mark Shapiro: And somebody said, "I want to learn, how do I get non-philanthropy staff to be getting more engaged?" And the answer is, you get involved in this because every single person that participated in GLI by leaps and bounds, by almost 100% growth, found that there was an increased percentage of revenue that was raised by non-executive and non-development staff. Every single person is on our philanthropy team because they're capable of stewarding people, they're capable of showing impact, they're capable of storytelling, they're capable of grabbing something that was great and bringing it to another person to make sure it gets highlighted.

**Do you have specific examples where building a Culture of Philanthropy led to success?**

Laurie Herrick: We had a group of people that were trained on building a Culture of Philanthropy, everybody. And what happened was there was a woman who did tours, environmental tours with people, and when she was taking a group of people out on a canoe trip she said, "Oh, this is my moment to connect with people. I'm just a program staff person here, but that's my job.” And she started chatting with them about some of the things that the organization had on their plate. And in that conversation what came up, which was really cool, was she said, "Look, we want to build this environmental center." Well, she didn't know it, but in the boats that she was guiding was a couple that were architects. One was a man who did building architecture and a woman who was an environmental landscape architect. And what happened was they ended up giving thousands of dollars worth of services. So it was very powerful. And I think that when we don't know and are open to what people have to offer, it starts to build something.

Mark Shapiro: We're trying to engage a very large donor who funds the largest scholarship fund we have at camp and does so in memory of his daughter who passed away too young. And we wanted to figure out a way to maybe shift some of his philanthropy from just scholarship to some other things and suggested that he donate the money to create the new prayer book at Camp Interlaken and that it be in her honor. And he was used to getting the scholarship return on investment: number of kids served, what percentage of their fees was he covering, and then wonderful thank you notes from them. How do you do that with the prayer book?

And so what we did was we actually found out what he wanted. His memory was of his daughter bringing Shabbat home to his house and then celebrating Shabbat after camp in ways they never did before [camp]. Never knew that story, never understood it. Gave the chance to find out why he would've been motivated to do it, we decided to print two copies of each prayer book, one to stay with the camper at camp and the other one to be sent home to the parents so when they came home, there was a prayer book for them to actually follow along and all that their kids had learned, and then be able to measure whether or not that prayer book was being used and to get anecdotes back by reaching out to the camp families and finding out, "So how many times have you used it this year? Do you have any great story about it?" And gather up the return on the investment.

**Do you have other ideas for building a Culture of Philanthropy?**

Laurie Herrick: The first thing you can do is say, "I get that there's some value in building a Culture of Philanthropy in my organization and I'm going to take a stand that we're going to do it." So just like I was taking a stand for million-dollar donor say, "I want this for my organization and I'm going to do what it takes." That's a big deal, is just taking that first step and saying, "I want to have this conversation with a group of my peers." From there, they start to build a team. But that goes through the steps to actually build a Culture of Philanthropy. So you could have a reading group and do something like that. I would say take a stand and move forward with it.

Mark Shapiro: I would quickly look and find at least one person that you think would be interested in this. Find one person to see if they're interested. And if they are, you just need one because then it's a different voice telling the story, and then the old Breck shampoo commercial, and then they'll tell two friends, and they'll tell two friends and it'll build. But you just got to find one. That's the way you start. One person that buys in, not buys into the idea, that finds that same idea.

Sarah Eisinger: I would say also put this report, if you're not the board chair, in front of your board chair and say, "Look, we got to talk about this because JCamp 180 has found that this methodology, and this curriculum, and this approach has worked and we could do it at our camp.”

I want to thank Mark, particularly for his time and sharing so many great stories. We really appreciate it and there's so much honesty and passion and we're thrilled to have you, Mark. And to Laurie, thank you for helping lead this work and bring this work to JCamp 180 and to our marvelous camps. So thank you everybody, it's been a great afternoon and discussion. Take care.