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Symphony Orchestra Institute Organization Change Consultation



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Symphony Orchestra Institute Organization Change Consultation

The mission of the Symphony Orchestra Institute is to improve the effectiveness of symphony orchestra organizations. In many organizations, such improvement will require significant change in the way the organization functions—significant change in internal processes and interactions.

In pursuing such change, an organization will quite often seek professional assistance from an “organization development” consultant or team. Indeed, the Institute may wish to assist selected, interested organizations in identifying and engaging consultants. The Institute may also wish to sponsor or assist some “organization process consultations,” including participation in the funding requirements. The Institute would participate, in part, with the view to developing more institutionalized methodologies which can be adapted to the specific needs of individual symphony organizations.

To this end, the Institute has adopted a set of beliefs and principles to guide “organization change” projects and consultations in the symphony world. The Institute hopes that the following statement of beliefs and principles will assist symphony organizations and consultants to pursue sound organization change programs. This statement is a charter for any consultation projects with which the Institute becomes affiliated.

Institute Beliefs and Principles

Total Systems Approach

The Institute believes that the most effective “help” or support to a symphony organization will occur when the process takes a “total systems” view. All groups within the “organizational system,” including the board, other key volunteers, staff, music director, musicians, their union, and parties representing audiences, general contributors, and the community at large, must be involved in some appropriate way in the process. Thus, the client in any organization change consultation must be the whole system. Every participant and related group involved in the organization must be served, directly or indirectly, as a whole, in an open and honest way.

Common Purpose and Vision

The most effective change for a symphony organization will come about when key leaders of each organizational component are aligned and supportive of a common, shared purpose and vision. The consultant must create processes and systems which encourage a common, shared purpose and vision, and a reconciliation of views when required.

Securing Will and Commitment

Sometimes consultation is required to secure the will and commitment of all parties essential to achieving a common, shared purpose and vision. The consultant may need to work with groups sequentially if this is required to secure the will and commitment of all key parties.

Freedom to Participate

Freedom to participate is key to high levels of involvement in organization change processes, and their eventual success. Those involved in symphony organization improvement processes must participate voluntarily, and have the freedom to withdraw from involvement at any time. The consultant must create processes which always establish conditions for the exercise of free will, but with an understanding and appreciation of the consequences of the exercise of that will.

Nature of Interaction

Individuals will bring to discussions their biases, history, and concerns as a normal part of working through issues and alternatives. The consultant must develop processes which account for and permit the expression of all points of view and opinion by all participants and groups, but emphasize the importance of engaging one another in a constructive, positive way. The consultant must also develop processes which ultimately will encourage open, frank conversation and appreciative listening.

Procedural Guidelines

Shared principles of behavior are key to civil, constructive, positive interaction among people working together to bring about change. The consultant must help the parties develop shared principles to guide behavior.

Nonalignment

The Institute believes that consultation will fail when and if it is viewed by one party as a means for validating or confirming a position, decision, or action of another party. All consultation must therefore be pursued with clear nonalignment, and be dedicated to finding a reconciliation of views and supporting the agreed-upon actions of all parties.

Recognition of Legitimacy

The symphony system is comprised of a number of different constituencies, each of which has a legitimate and important point of view and perspective that requires representation in any effective change process. The consultant must develop and support processes which maintain the legitimacy of all constituencies and which will not, through design or intent, denigrate or undermine the position of particular constituencies, individuals, or their points of view.

The Role of History

History is important in understanding the roots of current thinking and behavior, and must be recognized for its contribution to the present. The consultant must utilize history as a learning tool to help all parties understand how to improve current thinking and behavior.

Length of Engagement

What has taken years to establish cannot be undone overnight. The consultant must be engaged for a period sufficient to create a process which is perceived to have long-term impact along with immediate satisfaction of specific issues and concerns. The engagement must be sufficient to generate the energy and momentum which will lead to longer-term success.

Self-sustaining Process

Long-term success of any change program requires that the organization develop its own internal resource and support capability for continuous improvement. The consultant must help develop this capability in designated parties and help design appropriate supporting processes so that positive organization change will become self-sustaining.

Organizational Capability

The greater the interpersonal capability of all participants in an organization, especially those in current and prospective leadership roles, the greater the chance that organizational improvements will be sustainable. One objective in the design and execution of any intervention process should therefore be to develop the capability of all participants, and especially leaders, to work more effectively together.

Tangible Support

The chances of success increase when the investment required in a change process is shared equitably by all participants and groups involved. Every effort should be made to create the highest level of shared tangible investment on the part of all key parties, including monetary investment and other investments of time, energy, thought, commitment, and reputation.

Multiple Resources

Symphony orchestra organizational change consultations will usually be relatively complex, multiparty engagements, potentially involving board members, other key volunteers, staff members, the music director, player committee members and other musicians, including representatives of the local union, and perhaps some community representatives. In such engagements, it is often more effective to have multiple resources involved in the engagement and wherever and whenever possible, to utilize such multiple resources in designing and engaging in the intervention.