

Essay Question: What changes do you think are needed in the local nonprofit sector, and how will what you learn in this program help you to effectuate that change?

My active involvement in the nonprofit and volunteer sector spans a lifetime. I have worked with thousands of phenomenal people, whose commitment and dedication to volunteerism is awe-inspiring, and without equal in the 'business world'. There is an old saying, 'You couldn't pay people to do what our volunteers do.' It is so true. Volunteers are driven by a force more powerful than money. It is a determination fueled by the heart, and love for our Earth and fellow human beings knows no boundaries.

There is a tendency in the nonprofit world to take what comes, make the best of it, work like the dickens with free or inexpensive labor, and accept moderate outcomes. The consequence is a program that fails to succeed, a staff or volunteer base that becomes disillusioned, and an organization that suffers needlessly.

In my extensive involvement in the nonprofit sector, I have seen notable successes, and notable failures. By and large, the successful organizations adopt proven business models that incorporate concepts of accountability, responsibility, measurable outcomes, clear organizational vision, and recognition of individual performance. These basic principles, when applied in the business world, produce increased profits, employee retention, and corporate well-being. The same principles, when modified to conform to the needs of the nonprofit sector, can produce remarkable results.

Too many nonprofits are penny-wise and pound-foolish. They fail to invest in key staff positions, ignore organizational development challenges such as leadership and strategic planning, and overlook key infrastructure shortcomings. The result is that programs suffer, donations dry up, and organizational goals are not realized.

Local nonprofits would do well to borrow key concepts from successful business models, and apply proven organizational concepts as appropriate to improve the professional quality of the service product, and the overall success of the program.

The *Masters in Leadership Studies – Nonprofit Management Concentration* program will provide me with the solid foundation that I need to work effectively with

nonprofit organizations to improve the overall success of their programs. Through the academic curriculum I will learn to use the basic tools of management and leadership. Through the real-world practicum's in the community, I will apply these tools to effect change in a very real way. I am very excited about the opportunity to contribute my personal life energy towards the goal of creating a more vital nonprofit community.

Success breeds success. Nonprofits need to focus attention on finding success, and invest carefully in the tools needed to achieve that success.