
My 'ComeLead' Approach to Staff Supervision Worked Much Better - Part 2

In [Part 1](#), I shared how I started developing my ComeLead approach to staff supervision, adapting principles from coaching, mentoring, and everything I'd studied on leadership. The result is was kind of hybrid one-year program that has proven effective in my work with young nonprofit professionals. In this Part 2, let's go deeper.

The ComeLead Approach: Two Basic Principles

The ComeLead approach has two basic principles:

1. A comprehensive cross-training program which is a combination of coaching and mentoring
2. Supervision and leadership strategies focused on proven communication, teamwork, and time management implementation

Coaching and Mentoring Cross-Training Program

I'll bet, if you are like most nonprofits, your staff training programs are limited to the staff person's specific area of expertise. So, for example, your fundraisers only receive training in fundraising and your accounting staff only get accounting training. Makes sense, right? Wrong.

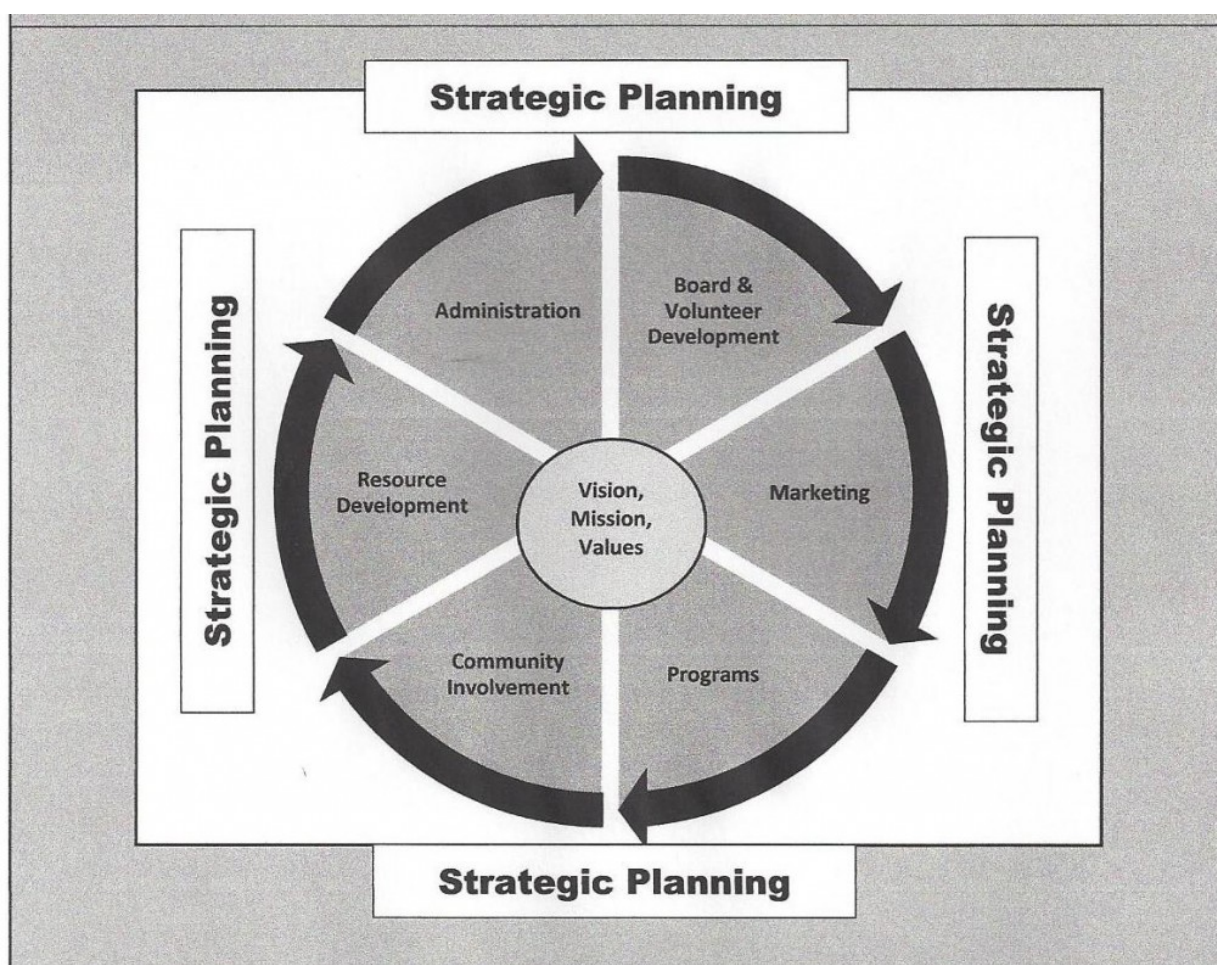
Here's why that approach probably isn't working in your nonprofit, especially if your annual budget is under \$3 million. Your staff members are working in multiple areas of the organization, right? That means they need a broader understanding of how the organization works.

I found from my role as a coach as well as when I was a CEO that when my staff members better understand the roles and responsibilities across all areas of the organization they are more likely to operate as a better team. And, interestingly enough, sometimes getting a taste of a different area leads staff members to expand their knowledge and switch into that job at a future date. The more knowledgeable all my staff members are about every aspect of the nonprofit, the better able everyone is to do their jobs.

You can implement cross-training by using a one-on-one coaching or mentoring strategy, rather than in a classroom-style, traditional approach. Or it can be done with multiple staff members in an interactive, facilitated approach in order to build teamwork. Another approach

is to pair your new staff with an experienced senior staff member who can coach or mentor, and cross-train, them for their first year. And, sometimes it is helpful if the coach-mentor works in an area different than the one the new staff person does, helping to provide a different perspective of your organization.

A good, comprehensive cross-training for all of your staff members should cover the core elements of a successful nonprofit, highlighting how each of the six elements operates within your nonprofit, including the role of strategic planning.



I group the following responsibilities under each of the six core elements:

1. Administration: Financial management, risk management, facilities and equipment,

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- legal issues, cyber security, human resources management
2. Board and Volunteer Development: Board/staff roles, responsibilities, recruitment, training, recognition policies and procedures for all three types of volunteers—board members, committee members and program volunteers; strategic planning, executive director hiring/supervision
 3. Marketing: Brand identity, marketing and publicity strategies, research, image enhancement
 4. Resource development: Planned giving, fundraising, gifts in kind
 5. Programs: Outcomes measurements, program development, resource and needs assessments
 6. Community Involvement: community outreach

The more detail each staff person has on how your nonprofit operates within each of the six elements, the more ownership that staff person will have of the nonprofit. If my chart doesn't match your organization, make a chart that fits yours.

Cross-training will mean each of your staff members is more apt to know the right questions to ask when things don't seem to be being done correctly. If all of the six elements are not balanced within the nonprofit, eventually it will fail. In other words, if you spend all your time fundraising and not enough time running programs, your nonprofit will go kaput.

I take my young professionals through a year-long, detailed look at each of the core elements so they really understand what it takes to run a nonprofit. As a result, regardless of the position they assume within any nonprofit, they will be a better team member and be able to identify weaknesses in any of the core elements.

Let me illustrate. One of the young professionals I was coaching worked for a small nonprofit as an administrative assistant. During the financial management section of the coaching, we discussed how executive salaries should be allocated across program expenses. She went back to her nonprofit and suggested to the accountant they could greatly reduce their overhead costs by allocating the salary costs for the time the ED spent counseling into programs instead of administration.

Was that something she would normally have known as part of her administrative job? Of course not. But because she was being trained, with the ED's approval, across other core elements of the organization she was able to pinpoint an area that could really help reduce

their overhead costs. A big win for the organization.

One-on-one coaching can be expensive (up to \$200 an hour), especially if done by an experienced nonprofit professional, but if, as the executive director, you are committed to really helping your staff members become the best they can be, there are ways to do combined coaching/mentoring cross-training sessions with several staff members at once. Be creative. Read up on coaching and mentoring and develop strategies that will work for you and your staff. Don't limit the training strategies to traditional approaches. Think outside the proverbial box. Or look for a retired professional to do it.

Humm. Maybe in a future article, I'll share the agenda for the year-long coaching which you can adapt to your training needs. But in the meantime, in Part 3 (the last part of this series) I'll discuss the second aspect of a ComeLead approach to staff development, the implementation by example of what I call the Circle of Management Excellence.