Executive EDGE

FOR-PROFIT PROFESSIONALS TEST THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT WATERS

Chris McAllister

When businesspersons from the for-profit sector become trustees of a not-for-profit organization, they may feel like fish out of water. Not wanting to appear overbearing, some usually aggressive business professionals may shy away from opposing proposals that could be detrimental to the organization. Or they may ignore or misinterpret a not-for-profit organization's mission and push for projects that simply support the bottom line.

Managers and staff of not-for-profit organizations can take steps to help trustees from the for-profit world contribute effectively during their tenure on the board. One way is to ensure that board reviews and deliberations are as "trustee-friendly" as possible. In addition, the organization's leaders should encourage trustees with business expertise to be even more disciplined when they examine the not-for-profit organization than they are when assessing a for-profit institution.

Business executives are accustomed to using benchmark data and constantly monitoring discrepancies between results and expectations. Not-for-profit groups can learn a lot from trustees from the for-profit sector by opening themselves to similar rigorous standards.

In addition, not-for-profit organization professional staff need to examine how they interact with board members from the for-profit sector. Sometimes staff can patronize business executives whom they believe are unfamiliar with the organization's uniqueness. Such treatment can prompt businesspersons to defer to the organization's "experts" when crucial proposals are being assessed.

The bottom line in the relationship between the businessperson trustee and the not-for-profit staff member is that each must genuinely respect the other. Such a relationship will blossom if the board member is helped to understand the realm in which the not-for-profit operates (e.g., the healthcare system).

From William G. Bowen, "When a Business Leader Joins a Nonprofit Board," Harvard Business Review, *September-October 1994, pp. 38-43.*

THE DISAPPEARING JOB

Corporate layoffs have been one of the big news stories of the early 1990s. But job losses resulting from "downsizing" are only a symptom of a larger historical phenomenon: the end of the job itself.

We forget that the job is of relatively recent origin. Before the Industrial Revolution—before, that is, the herding of laborers into factories—most people performed a variety of tasks. They did not hold jobs. Now, technological changes are making factory-style work a thing of the past, and organizations are thus being "de-jobbed."

Work in the future will be done by members of project teams, not job holders. Already, companies like EDS, Intel, and Microsoft hire people to serve on projects—which may or may not lead to work on other projects. In the postjob era, workers will have to begin to think like vendors. More and more, companies will rent a worker's talents; they will not want to own them, as they tend to do with the old-fashioned job.

As a vendor of talents, the postjob worker will be much more self-directed and independent than today's employees. The company will therefore need far fewer managers than it does now. For such a system to work well, workers will have to be given information about the company's needs and goals that only decision makers now possess. To ensure that workers share company goals, they will also have to be given a share of the company's profits.

The postjob worker will have much more freedom in arranging vacations, leaves of absence, and retirement. And employers will, of course, be free of the responsibility of paying for them. This postjob world may seem scary to some people, but it is inevitable. Companies that do not "de-job" will soon be extinct.

From William Bridge, "The End of the Job," Fortune, *September 1994, pp. 62-74.*