CHARITY MATTERS

Resources are defined as *"a stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organisation in order to function effectively". Resources, or lack thereof, remain a constant issue for community, voluntary and charitable organisations.*

When we think of resources, we invariably think of employees, either fulltime or part time (including individuals on government schemes). Charities sometimes struggle with balancing the number of employees they require against the need to deliver the services that underpin their charitable status. Charities are businesses that function within the realm of the law and must be run professionally and transparently by appropriately trained and experienced individuals, which in essence are their main resources (of course notwithstanding the need for adequate funding).

Building capacity is often overlooked by charitable organisations such is the pressure to increase services to meet an increasing demand within a sector that suffered a reduction in funding in recent years. Without building capacity, charities will eventually become overstretched leading to a myriad of organisational difficulties. So how do we go about building capacity and increasing our resources?

Your board is a resource that can add value beyond their position as trustees of the charity. Individual board members can often help by supporting the CEO in an annual review of policy documents, appropriately scheduled and apportioned, which can provide additional oversight and at times, specific expertise in a given area. Don't assume that they can't assist.....ask and you may be pleasantly surprised.

Training staff and upskilling staff is an essential part of building capacity and boosting resources. Training builds morale which in turn improves performance. Every staff member has strengths and weaknesses and these should be matched to organisational needs. Don't be afraid as a manager or CEO to redefine and / or mix roles and responsibilities. Community, voluntary and charitable groups tend to have flatter organisational structures than their commercial counterparts which allows for more flexibility and inter-changeability of roles which can be empowering and liberating for staff. It is also very forward thinking and progressive to do so.

Volunteers are critical resources for every organisation but should not be viewed as they were 20 / 30 years ago when becoming a volunteer meant being a volunteer for life! Life is different now and there are more demands on people's time. We may have to look at recruiting volunteers for specific projects or to deliver specific services within a specific and shorter timeframe. Volunteers can be reluctant to take a long-term view so we should support them short-term with the long-term in mind. It's a different approach to attracting volunteers and volunteers may be happier to sign up. Critically, and extremely important is the fact that people are working longer and retiring later which means that the number of retirees (a constant source for volunteer recruitment) are taking longer to come on stream which has a knock on effect.

Finally, (leaving funding aside) we must add the following into our mix of resources: appropriate and current documentation; memberships and the benefits therein of their services such as The Wheel and Fundraising Ireland; the sharing of templates and good practices across like-minded organisations; our communications & social media and that critical and much maligned area of Time Management, which we will visit another day!

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