

LEADERSHIP

The Role Of Multidisciplinary Work In Coping With A Complex Social Phenomenon



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When trying to cope with a widespread social phenomenon, such as child maltreatment, you quickly come to an understanding that in order to succeed, focusing on one aspect related to your

targeted phenomenon is usually not enough. It takes a vibrant, diverse team of skilled professionals from different disciplines to tackle it, step by step.

My nonprofit has been working to train professionals and engage in research in order to cope with child abuse and neglect. Putting aside the emotional load that is inevitable while dealing closely with this issue, we had to figure out a way to work with the various services and professions addressing this issue.

Our mission was in front of our eyes, but like many nonprofits, we had to choose our strategy and focus. Where should we start? This phenomenon has legal, medical, educational and social aspects to it. Should we focus on one aspect or reach out to all professions at once? How can we provide the information and tools needed to all the different disciplines?

The quest to answering these questions led us to a clear answer. We needed to work as a multidisciplinary team in order to be truly relevant and to create a multi-professional language that would allow all services working with abused and neglected children to work in cohesion. If our goal is to cope with this widespread social phenomenon, we need the best players from all the various fields on our team. But how do you lead such a team?

Here are some of my tips for leading a multidisciplinary staff and working with a variety of professionals:

1. Set a clear, unified vision.

When leading a multidisciplinary team that trains and works with a variety of professionals, you have to set a clear vision for your non-governmental organization's (NGO) goals and targets. Each staff member might have a different professional socialization, but the essence and vision of your NGO should be shared by all. Deciding upon clear goals that are known and shared with the entire staff is the first step in leading your way to success.

2. Stay true to your goals.

Working with various professional groups and hand-tailoring programs for your diverse customers might pull you away from your main goals as an NGO. In my NGO, for example, each service we reach out to might request training on different topics related to their unique working environment. It should be clear to all workers on our staff what our main goals are, and they should keep them as the primary focus of their daily interaction with our clients.

Staying true to your initial goals and making decisions according to them is the only way to keep your NGO focused and target-aimed, especially when trying to cope with such complicated social realities.

3. Put your ego aside.

It doesn't matter whether you're a cop, a social worker or a nurse -- while working together to overcome a widespread social phenomenon, everyone should put their ego aside.

As a team, we all work together to achieve mutual goals that are bigger and much more important than our individual professional ego. By working together, a multidisciplinary staff can become a model for cooperative work in the eyes of the multidisciplinary services that should be collaborating in the field.

4. Communicate.

Even more than with any other staff, you should place an important emphasis on communication when it comes to working with staff members from various professions. Staff meetings, ongoing updates, mutual programs and learning sessions are valuable and much needed in order to keep everyone in synchronization, up to date and focused on the same goals.

5. Speak the same language.

It is important for all staff members to speak in a unified professional language, alongside the language they were socialized to speak with their own peers. By creating a common terminology within your team, despite its differences, you will enable mutual learning within your NGO -- an enhancement of knowledge and cooperation which will enrich the work being done and will advance your NGO toward achieving its goals.

Becoming an inherent part of your NGO, this unified professional language will trickle down to the professional field, creating a solid base for gaining knowledge and working together to overcome complicated social phenomenon.

In conclusion, my experience has helped me understand that coping with widespread social issues requires, in many ways, coping with a wide range of professionals on your team and out in the field. To remain relevant and create an impact, you and your team must remain focused on your main goals, work together and communicate effectively. Succeeding in that might enable other significant players in your field to collaborate with one another and can create a strong foundation for tackling complicated phenomenon, together.

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