

Welcome to the seventeenth edition of Jennifer Selby Long's *Traveling Light*. Are you blessed with the talent and opportunity to lead? *Traveling Light* will skyrocket your impact and lighten the load inherent in your life. It's based on the work of executive coach and management consultant Jennifer Selby Long. Copyright 2008 Jennifer Selby Long. All rights reserved.

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How to Have a Lousy, Miserable, Failed Tenure as a Volunteer Board Member



Does that sound like a crazy headline coming from a management consultant? Well, after a long vacation, I'm in the mood for a little silliness.

Nearly all leaders extend their leadership beyond the workplace to head volunteer organizations throughout their lives, often as board members.

It doesn't take long in your first volunteer leadership job to realize things are different from your paid leadership job, the most obvious being that you can't use compensation as a motivator and absolutely nobody has to do their job for fundamental reasons like paying the mortgage.

The following tips are gleaned from years of experience, and the pain of trial and error. Don't make the same mistakes other leaders, including this one, have made.

There are seven root causes of poor volunteer organization leadership. It's not complicated and anyone can identify, understand, and prevent them. I've phrased them as tips just for the fun of it:

1. Don't plan ahead. That way, you can't involve many people because so few of them will be available on short notice. Then you can enjoy the pleasure of being a martyr who's always overworked and moans about how no one helps out.

2. Don't define the specific roles and responsibilities of each volunteer position. That way, few people will volunteer, since they will be leery that they'll get *everything* dumped on them.
3. Don't get to know one another personally. Make it all business, so that when conflict erupts and there's no personal financial motivation, people have even fewer incentives to stick around and work things out.
4. Talk with only your fellow board members at meetings, since you don't have much time together and it feels so good to catch up with the people you know instead of risking rejection by talking to people you don't know. By not talking to strangers, you can keep the volunteer pipeline empty, so not only will you have no volunteers to help you out this year, you'll have no one to take over your position next year.
5. Once you do get a volunteer, it's enough to just think about how much you appreciate their help. No need to actually tell them, but if you do, certainly don't tell them very often. When you do communicate, make sure it's to correct all of their mistakes. It's their fault, after all. Throw in a little annoyance for the complete leadership package.
6. Miss most of the Board conference calls and especially any face-to-face Board retreats, so that you can always work as an individual instead of with the full support of a strong team.
7. Make sure that you think of recruiting your successor as the unpleasant task you'll get to during the last month of your tenure. By all means, never assume you should invest time now in identifying suitable successors, slowly building relationships with them, recruiting them to test out their interest by volunteering on your team, and then asking one of them to step into your role in a well-planned transition.

That was fun. I love doing backward lists.

Now, please, get out there and do the opposite and have a wonderful, satisfying, successful tenure as a volunteer board member!

Summer's Here, and It's Time to Relax



After five months of frequent travel, culminating in our fun trip to Spain, Kirk and I are ready to kick back on the weekends, fire up the grill, and lounge around the backyard, a particularly soothing place since we got rid of that gross, algae-ridden, high-maintenance pond. We'll invite friends over for very casual meals, and hopefully get a few invitations to do the same.

There's something so relaxing about summer time, and for me it's at the cellular level. Maybe it's because my dad was a teacher when I was a little kid, but summer to me is when you relax. I haven't actually taken a summer off from work since my first babysitting job in 1977. Still, there's something different about summer, even if my work is demanding. Something mellow. Something that says, "Pace yourself. That other stuff can wait..."

Since meeting Kirk four years ago, our lives have been a whirlwind of activities and responsibilities. This summer, we're finally in a position to dial it down and rest up on the weekends. The weather in Oakland is warm and sunny, no icy cold ocean fog. The ceiling fans spin lazily overhead, reminding us to just chill out, recover, and renew. Ahhhh....

What's on your summer calendar? How will you relish it? Sure, if you miss it, summer will always come around again, but this particular summer comes but once. It would be a shame to miss the whole thing.

Traveling Light is a Year Old



I know I already announced this in the last newsletter, but the picture was so cute I just had to run it again. Thanks to everyone who emails us and forwards this newsletter to your colleagues and friends. Our readership has grown an amazing 50% without even a proper promotional effort. What a rush.

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