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NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND MORALE ISSUES

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Many nonprofits suffer from poor staff morale that can affect overall constituent morale. Effectively managing change and staff are skills that are developed over time. Some heads and CEO's manage by making few or no decisions. Others manage by making too many decisions independently and too quickly.

High turnover of boards leads to high turnover of chairs. High chair turnover leads to a high turnover of CEO's. All of this turnover at the top can result in a power vacuum, often filled by the staff which may have the only institutional memory left. They may choose to exercise it in ways that most benefit themselves, but may not always be helpful to the organization as a whole.

A board anxious to retake decision-making authority for the administration may retain a new CEO who moves quickly on change initiatives. Staff morale may plummet as a result, and the board may fire the very leader who was directed to take the actions that most upset the staff. A cycle of low morale and high turnover may develop and undermine the long-term health of the institution and its ability to execute its mission.

Organizational culture is a product of past history, successes and failures, "lore" about staff's real or perceived mistreatment at the hands of the board or administration, and of having little "voice" in decision making that affects them.

CEO's or executive directors are not oblivious to the extent of unhappiness in organizations, but they often avoid addressing it. It is easier and less confrontational to "lay low" with an angry culture than to take the risks associated with trying to improve it. Leaders are never sure if it is even possible to make such cultures more positive, or if tackling the issue is worth the risk.

Throughout the world, Littleford & Associates works with schools and organizations to help support "moral" cultures in healing old wounds and building new coalitions for positive change. Our Firm has more than 600 clients worldwide on this and related topics. The tool is a highly effective organizational climate workshop preceded by interviews with a cross-section of the staff and the senior administration.



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Change does not occur overnight, but with prescribed follow up assignments that are outlined to members of the workshop group, this group is able to penetrate old behaviors and begin to modify and improve behaviors within the culture. These behaviors may have developed over many years, yet can be modified within 18 months to three years in significant and often remarkable ways.

The ultimate beneficiaries of an improvement in staff morale are the constituents they serve.