Arts Leadership in the Public Sector Workshop
October 18, 2013

Facilitator: Jonathan Katz, Chief Executive Officer, NASAA
See the facilitator's bio under Friday Morning Workshops.

Jonathan Katz opened the session by describing NASAA's organization model as a system to advance leadership among its members through gathering data and information, developing knowledge and wisdom, fostering networking, and making broad perspectives available. He pointed out that NASAA, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have similar missions as associations of government agencies. Approaching organizations as systems to accomplish their central missions can be an important leadership attribute, Katz said, as he has found in his roles of advisor to IFACCA and member of the U.S. Commission on UNESCO.

Katz shared the experience of being asked to report to the board of IFACCA on what could be learned from the events at its World Summit in Melbourne that would be helpful in charting the organization's activities going forward. His strategy at the summit included attending all plenaries and a few minutes of 18 different sessions offered 9 at a time. He described the experience as eye-opening, not only because he came away with a uniquely valuable perspective on the gathering, but because most sessions have a kernel of value and yield marginal benefits for additional time, though he asserted that would not be true of this session.

Katz explained that one way to design this session would have been to focus on the kinds of knowledge about state arts agencies that would help agency leaders make wise and confident choices. Topics could include "value-rich program strategies," "politically adept budget allocation," the factors that define a strong state arts agency, and approaches to increasing the "public value" of an agency. Because much of what NASAA provides its members all year round fits this description, Katz said he chose instead to focus on leadership development as an independent subject, applicable in any professional, social or personal context.

Leadership for Decision Making

Katz then introduced a variety of approaches to leadership and its development. The literature on leadership and decision making is vast, and there are many different assertions about what constitutes good leadership. One approach attempts

to define a set of leadership traits. Katz pointed out that different professions identify and honor different traits. A second approach relates leadership to the management of situations and crises, a third to team building, a fourth to advancing one's organization, a fifth to advancing one's field or sector, and a sixth to identifying the universal benefit that derives from a needed course of action. Katz said it is a valuable exercise to consider the kind of leadership one is interested in exercising. He then said that in the interests of time he would offer some practical decision-making tools, the use of which, he believes, results in people being chosen by others as leaders.

Suggesting that there is universal structure to problems, Katz proposed a linear, 13-step decision-making process that can be applied to all problems. He has introduced this process to many groups, including universities and foundations. It works for a broad array of problems, both professional and personal.

He invited session participants to join him in testing the 13-step process by thinking of an agency-related problem. Examples of issues proffered by participants include:

- agency funding
- priorities (both determining and organizing them)
- lack of influence with politicians, constituency
- perception
- communication
- authority roadblocks (e.g., new administration)
- unionized staff
- lack of capacity
- entrenched staff attitudes
- leadership search
- lack of public awareness and support

He also invited participants to test the process by thinking of a personal problem, which would remain private, and submitting it to the same steps as the agency problem the group would select. Katz then walked through the process, soliciting input relative to participants' examples along the way.

13-Step Problem Solving Process

1. **Identify the Problem**—*participant example:* entrenched staff attitudes

2. **Factors of Problems**—*participant examples:* a weak/misdirected hiring process; a weak evaluation process

    a. The prospect of a problem/crisis induces a "fight or flight" response; people tend to revert to previously used strategies, despite their appropriateness or effectiveness.
    b. The purpose of Katz's method is to break the circular pattern of relapsing to known strategies and actions.

3. **Factors: People**—*participant example:* interpersonal conflicts

4. **Factors: Circumstances/Environment**

5. **Factors: Other**—*participant examples:* politics; retirements and new hires; factors not recognized at first glance

6. **Factors that Perpetuate Problems**—*participant examples:* obstacles; avoiding confrontation

   a. Conduct a force-field analysis: identify the forces keeping your goal at bay.
   b. Consider whether there is a net cost or net benefit to perpetuating the problem. There is often a larger underlying issue (e.g., fear, increased workload) sustaining the problem being solved through this process. If the payoff for solving the problem is larger than the cost of confronting the issue, then the problem should be addressed; if the cost of confronting the issue is larger, then the problem should be redefined as a condition of this work situation and treated (engaged with? bypassed? resigned from?) accordingly.

7. **Alternative I** (Advantage?/Disadvantage?)

8. **Alternative II** (Advantage?/Disadvantage?)

9. **Alternative III** (Advantage?/Disadvantage?)

10. **Decision: Best Alternative Approach**

11. **Test Alternative against Status Quo**

12. **Test Opportunity Cost**

    a. Opportunity cost is the concept that an investment of resources is made at the price of anything else those resources could accomplish. Therefore, the great manager, at the point of investment—clearing away the problem-solving process thus far—asks the question of whether there is *something else* more valuable that this level of effort (dollars, positions, time, etc.) could be used to accomplish.

13. **Measure, Monitor, Evaluate**

    a. Identify indicators and develop rubrics to measure outcomes. Plans become management tools when such rubrics are developed and used. (This step in the process is critical—and it is where problem-solving plans often fail.)

Questions and Further Discussion

One participant noted that measuring the payoff of addressing problems applies a rational structure to what often is an irrational situation. This can be problematic.

Another participant raised the point that state arts agency directors generally deal with a couple of dozen problems at once, making it difficult to focus on one or even to decide which one to focus on.

In answer to a question about whether Step 13 (Measure, Monitor, Evaluate) should precede Step 1 (Identify the Problem), Katz said that depends upon whether data must be gathered to identify the problem.

Two Decision Tools

Katz reviewed the Boston Grid method for situational assessments and time management. Using this method, a decision maker plots the issue being addressed on a four-square matrix delineated by two axes: one measuring urgency (high-low) and the other measuring relative impact (high-low). This helps the decision maker analyze issues and alternatives with an eye toward immediate perceived relevance versus long-term opportunity costs. For example, responding to an e-mail may be something that is done within a matter of hours (high urgency), but has little bearing on realizing strategic goals (low impact).

Boston Grid

Urgency

	High	Low
Impact — High		e.g., annual meeting planning
Impact — Low	e.g., e-mail reply	

Organizing a conference, however, may begin two years out (low urgency), but is one of the most valuable services provided (high impact). In Katz's view, almost everyone knows to choose high-high quadrant tasks and avoid low-lows, but leaders often emerge by developing the generally more productive habit of choosing low-urgency tasks with high impact instead of high-urgency tasks with low impact.

Katz concluded with a discussion of approaches to environmental scanning. One approach is to consider a variety of factors and trends that will affect the ability of the organization to achieve its goals, such as the economy, politics, technology, leisure time use, education, arts participation, equality of opportunity, etc. Program strategies should incorporate consideration of the most influential trends so that the most likely change is a friend and not an enemy to goal

SWOT Analysis

S	W
Strength	Weakness
O	T
Opportunity	Threat
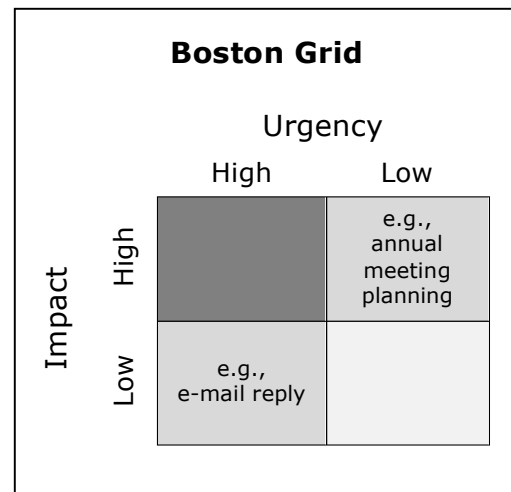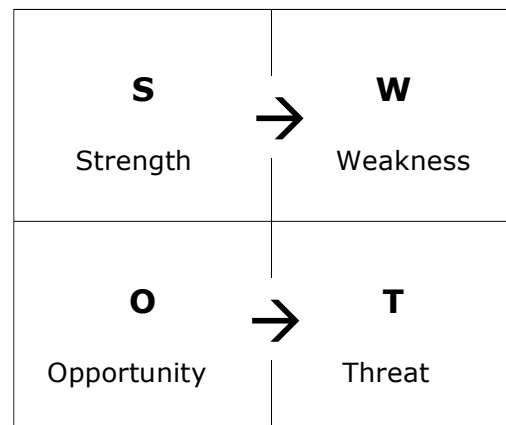
achievement. Another approach is SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, which, like the Boston Grid, can be depicted as a four-square diagram. Katz offered two insights he said could be valuable to leaders using this approach. One is that it is best to analyze strengths before weaknesses and opportunities before threats. This is to acknowledge previous accomplishments, reinforce a sense of ability to succeed, reduce participants' sense of criticism when brainstorming alternatives to current practice, and keep minds open to adaptation. The other insight is that discussion of strengths and weaknesses can be managed to focus on internal issues, and discussion of opportunities and threats can be managed to focus on external influences.

Katz pointed to the easel at the front of the room, which contained a list of leaderly behaviors (right). He thanked the session attendees for their active participation, noted that he has many more tools and exercises focused on the listed aspects of leadership, and encouraged members to think of NASAA as a resource for this topic.

Be a Person Who:

- Identifies and clarifies problems
- Gets work done
- Provides the critical insight*
- Catalyzes the needed change
- Improves whatever you do
- Develops strategic approaches
- Makes sure plans succeed
- Moves a group from process to active teamwork
- Can think through a challenge no matter how big
- Cultivates leadership in others