

Partnership and Leadership; What Makes For a Successful Grant

The Partnering Movement is a Community of Giving and Receiving where all are equal at the foot of the cross. Funders will ask: What is your idea? What is your track record? Are you committed to your vision? Are you working with others – are you connecting at the level of vision?

Introduction

Rob: I'm here today with Brian O'Connell of [REACT Services](#) and we're continuing our conversation about partnership, fundraising for partnership, fundraising for mission, the purpose of partnership and mission, a lot of things that go into partnership.

One of the things is the characteristics of leadership.

Brian: Oh, without a doubt.

Rob: And how does that work.



Four Characteristics That Lead to Successful Grants

Rob: And so in the years that I've worked in philanthropy, I developed kind of a model and I explored this, and when money goes on mission.

A model of the characteristics I look for in what made for a successful grant, so this is based on the grants that my board actually paid attention to and funded, that I brought to them.

What were the things that made those grants successful in terms of how we looked at the leaders?

And there were four major characteristics that came into play.

1. Purpose/Vision

Rob: The first was in the explanation of vision, how did they see vision?

This was the answer to the three questions that I [raise in the book](#) about what is God showing you as a leader, what's he telling you to do about that, that he has shown you, and how will you know you've done it.

These questions are deceptively simple. They've been used by literally--

Brian: Many of us.

Rob: Thousands of people now but hundreds that I've worked directly with on this.

And the challenge is always, is how do I communicate vision?

And so that's why I broke it down into these three questions.

That first question of, what is God showing me? Is, I believe, that if God has called you to do something, he will show you the pathologies of that thing that he wants you to do.

Brian: That's right.

Rob: He will show you the challenges and the difficulties, and you won't be able to let go of it.

Yet, it's just everywhere you look. It's in your dreams, it's in your thoughts. You're just locked down on that thing and you begin to notice it everywhere.

And in all circumstances, you think about it all the time, because God is calling you and he is helping your attention get focused on the pathologies that he wants you specifically to work it.

So then you take that and you say, okay, God, I see this, what am I supposed to do about it? And we all at that point bring our strategies.

So at the rescue mission, way back in the beginning at the book, I talk about how I came to the answer to that question, for us at the rescue mission, 'cause we saw the homeless, we saw the disabled veterans, we saw the veterans struggling from PTSD at the conclusion of the Vietnam War.

We saw the beginning of the bag lady phenomenon, when the mental institutions closed and people were given psychotropic drugs that they didn't take in a state disability insurance check.

Brian: They still don't take it.

Rob: Which they either didn't cash or had that money stolen from them soon after.

And we saw the roots of the homeless problem and we saw it and what was our reaction? At the mission, we provided housing.

Actually, one of the most important things we did was we gave people an address. Turns out, if you don't have an address, you're not a person.

Brian: Hard to get a job.

Rob: No, you're not a person, you can't even get your social security check.

You need an address. And so, we provided an address.

There were 201 South, 2nd Avenue in Santa Ana, there had to be 600-700 people at one point that had that address.

Brian: I'll keep that in mind, actually.

Rob: And the social services knew it, but that wasn't really what we were about.

Brian: No.

Rob: We were evangelists to the poor. That's how we answered the second question.

Now, back then I didn't understand integrated mission, I didn't understand holistic mission in how to define it as a concept, we just knew you can't preach the gospel to a hungry man, yet, the best way out of the gutter was with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Brian: Well, and the relational outreach that most of those--

Rob: So, the answer to the second question is what is your calling? What is your purpose?

And then, the third question is how will you know if you're doing it?

This is in that, gross sense is that people are actually coming up out of the street, that they're actually getting a new life, that they're actually hearing the gospel, they're actually understanding,

Brian: And responding to it.

Rob: That the God that created the universe actually cares about them.

Brian: Indeed.

Rob: And cares about their every day needs.

Brian: He does.

Rob: So that all forms purpose. And it's at purpose where we connect.

So, I either communicate vision to you, that you may or may not have, you either respond to that vision or don't.

But as a funder, I wanna know your vision, because we have a vision for where we wanna put the money to work.

2. Character

Rob: And so if there's a connection there, then we move to the next one. If we matched at vision, then I immediately went to your character.

And this is, what kind of person are you? Do you tell the truth? Are you afraid of failure?

Do you embrace failure? Do you study failure? Do you question success? Are you willing to discuss that?

Brian: Holistic integrity, I think.

Rob: Holistic integrity, good word.

Brian: Yeah.

Rob: And so what do others say about you?

What is the nature of your leadership, because we're gonna be offering you trust at the end of the day, and are you a trustworthy person?

3. Idea

Rob: If that test kind of gets passed or we connect at that path, at that thing, then the next thing I'll look at, is the thing you're actually asking the funds for.

Is what's your idea--

Brian: Is what you're looking at.

Rob: Does it make sense within the context of your purpose?

So at the mission, our idea might be that we wanna start a new life program and we need some funds to hire the staff and put together the extra bedrooms and dormitories that we might need for the flood of people that are coming in.

But all of that only makes sense in terms of our purpose and our characteristics.

4. Track Record

Rob: And then the last thing we looked at was, okay, so we've got a check mark on all three of these, then the fourth was your track record.

And if you were new at it, that my influence the size of the grant.

Brian: Yeah, usually.

Rob: And are you a truth teller? And also, do you have partnership? Are you working with others?

Brian: We usually say when I do a lot of mentoring to especially younger people, who are mostly doing startup kinds of ministry.

And so they have no track record to show. and so the encouragement that I always say is, look, you've got to feel strongly about your calling.

You can't question your calling, 'cause if you're questioning your calling, you'll never make it.

Rob: Let's stop there for a second. The value of knowing your purpose is because you are going to hit brick walls.

Brian: And this is my point --

Rob: And when you hit that brick wall, is it God saying, don't go there, or is it a brick wall that says, get over this wall, figure out how to surmount it, go around it, go under it, or knock it down.

So, you have to have this sense of your purpose, so that you can get through those questions, because you are going to have opposition and it could come from your humanness, or it could come from the enemy.



Leaders Build Partnering Movements

Brian: One of my early mentors, his name was Paul McCoynn.

Now, I know you know, who has subsequently passed, he always said to me early on in my ministry, He who calls, also enables.

And so, if you believe in your calling enough, the enablement will come. It may not come in the way you think. It may not come how you think, or anyway, but it will come.

And your last point, is one that I think, too many groups, many of them do have those ideas, okay, what's the calling?

What's the idea? What's the character? What's the track record?

Very few ask that final question, which in my world I say, how well do they play with others? In other words, are they partnering-friendly?

Are the organizations have a DNA, that lends itself to partnering friendliness. Is there staff understanding that that's who we are as an organization.

Does the CEO lead that? Because he can't make all the decisions. A good CEO tend to, at least half, if not more, on financial development.

And so the idea building, partnering DNA into an organizational structure is something we work strongly on, with the leadership, especially as we're trying to build a movement, a partnering movement.

We need to see new leaders. We definitely need to see new leaders.

Rob: Right, in the book, I call it, the Communion of giving or receiving, it has many different aspects, but this idea of communion, where we are equals at the cross.

No underdog, no overdog, no strong versus weak, no rich versus poor, at the cross we're all equals.

Brian: Too right.

Rob: And, so, let's look at the challenge of funding partnership.



Leaders Show Vulnerability

Brian: Final point on the leadership before we move that, because I think it's critical for us, as we've looked at building a movement.

What kind of leaders do we look for? And all of your points in the book, lend itself to exactly that.

I was at a conference in 1990 with John Wenbirk. It was in England, Spring Harvest, if you're familiar with that gathering.

And I had been asked to do, a small little group gathering for youth, and of course, John was the big main speaker in the big tent. But we were all in the green room together.

So, John and I had the opportunity to talk, and this was just to the point where John had kind of looked to the global expansion of the vineyard. And there was so much interest. And especially in the U.K. and in Europe and other places.

And so, I was asking him, you know, it must be a pretty big challenge for you?

And he's, "Oh, it's an amazing new challenge, "I'm excited, God's in it."

And I said, so, how do you determine what leaders, you have to have more leaders in this movement, how do you determine which leaders that you're gonna choose?

There's a lot of ability out there, how do you narrow that list?

"Oh, so, that's easy!" It's typical John. "Simple, two things we look for: do they walk with a limp? And did they smell like smoke from the fire they had to walk through?"

And I never forgot that. Because the idea of vulnerability as a leader.

So, the concept, as he was describing it, as walking with a limp, means you see the fact they have a wound.

You see that vulnerability. You see that ability to share.

That credibility that you talked about: What's your track record? Well, you smell like smoke, 'cause you've had to walk through a lot of fires.

You've had to save people from a lot of fires. You've had to be saved from a few fires. And you have those marks on you as a leader.

And I think, too often, especially in 21st century, celebrity culture in the leadership arena, that it's just not, for us in the partnering movement anyway, that is just not the kind of leader we need.

We need a leader who is vulnerable, we need a leader who isn't worried about who gets the credit, who isn't worried about how they look, necessarily.

It's all about how can we make others successful. And I think that directly relates to the way in which it's sometimes a challenge to fund.

Because the celebrity person, the person who has high platform and who has high ability and charisma and all of that, sometimes can draw resources to them.

And I'm not saying that's bad. A lot of them are doing fantastic work. But in the partnering movement, we're oftentimes--

Rob: Or the partnering idea.

Brian: We're oftentimes behind the scenes.

We're oftentimes trying to point to other things that are happening, other initiatives that are going on, other opportunities for collaboration to take place.

And it isn't about us as a leader, or as an entity, as an organization. It's all about how can we release the Holy Spirit into these movements.



Leaders Demonstrate Accountability

Rob: This brings up these idea of corruption.

Brian: Huh!

Rob: Let's go into that for a moment.

Brian: You're saying there are a few corrupt leaders out there?

Rob: Well, yes.

Brian: Yes, there are.

Rob: More than a few wolves wandering around the sheep fold.

And quite often how you know that they are a wolf, is they use the word partnering.

They'll use this idea of, come join what we're doing, be our partner, which means come and, what's the old joke about two wolves and a sheep are debating on where to go for a lunch or what to have for lunch.

Brian: Yeah, we know where that ends--

Rob: We kinda know where this ends.

Brian: Lamb stew.

Rob: I mean, when you look at one of the great collaborative efforts here in the United States, it's got a very difficult name, that doesn't travel well.

It's: [Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability](#).

Brian: The acronym travels well.

Rob: ECFA. But it is, at its root, a partnering movement.

It is a peer accountability movement, in which we all, who take that seal, join to the ideas of partnership in these ways.

Brian: And that relates to the vulnerability. You've got to be vulnerable in your accounting too.

Rob: That's right.

Brian: You've got to be transparent.

And it's one of those issues, globally, that really presents problems.



The Problem with the Prosperity Gospel

Brian: In my opinion, one of the, two or three, but one of the biggest challenges facing the church right now is the prosperity gospel.

And it's kind of ebbed and flowed over the years, and now it's definitely flowing. And I think we've got to promote this idea of accountability, not just on the financial side of things, but on the theological side of things.

What does it mean to be following Jesus?

And, you know, one of my all-time foundational books was a book called, [*The Cost of Discipleship*](#) by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

And within the many circles of the prosperity gospel, there's not cost, there's benefits, all benefits. All is benefits.

That's not the cross of Jesus that we're called to. And that relates to a whole host of issues related to how, not only are we working together cross and multi-culturally, but how do we help each other?

When we do fall, 'cause we will, fall into these pits and these things, it just happens to all of us. We need to be sometimes firm, but sometimes we need to be gentle and offer that hand up and say--

Rob: Well, [ECFA](#) and the [Global Trust Partners](#), which is the international version--

Brian: The global version of it, yeah, yeah.

Rob: Which you can find a series of podcasts elsewhere on this website with Doctor Gary Hoag, who is the executive director of the Global Trust Partnership, the generosity monk, beautiful man.

Brian: Oh my gosh!

Rob: I've got three wonderful podcasts with him--

Brian: Oh, fantastic.

Rob: Up on the website about this.

This global trust partnering movement, one of the indicators of why it's needed is there is an expectation, this came out of a [recent Lausanne Occasional Paper](#), of 50 billion dollars in corruption, that is misuse of Christian gifts.

Brian: I think that's an underestimation.

Rob: Gifts that are given and I think it is. I can think of four prosperity preachers just in the United States that make up one billion of it.

Brian: There you go.

Rob: But generally, if you wanna see somebody with an issue, is start with how independent are they, and how kingdom-minded are they rather than--

Brian: Well, that was the original reason for why denominations were established.

It's so that we could have credibility in knowing that this church is associated with this group, and this group believe this, so there's theological accountability.

There's also financial accountability to it as well.

Rob: Right.

Brian: And I'm not saying that denominations that kind of been in mostly, the whole movement is in decline, I'm not saying that's necessarily good or bad, I'm just saying its a reality.

That's lent itself, I think, to this age where there is little accountability.

These independent groups and churches and entities are doing stuff without any attention to them.

So, the Global Trust is a fantastic example of a new partnership working.