Friends of the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library

*Friends Choose their Own Leadership*

Leadership Success with a Team

Kathy Adam Browne, Wilma Jozwiak, Rhona Koretzky, Sheila Morroni, and Ambika Sambasivan
Presenters and Collaborators

• The Leadership Team
  – Kathy Adam Browne
  – Wilma Jozwiak
  – Rhona Koretzky
  – Sheila Morroni
  – Michele Gorab (January 2018)

• Our wonderful Retreat Facilitator
  – Ambika Sambasivan (Fruitfly Consulting)
How we were - CPHL Friends 2000

- Books for Babies
- Get Out the Vote
- Outreach
- Limited Proctors Ticket sales
- Travel
- Used Book Sales
- Basic website
- Basic email marketing
What’s the same?
... Board Members still have complex lives...
For the President, it was getting to be too much ...
Things We Had Tried . . .

- Instituted a two-year term limit to eliminate the dreaded “President for life” phenomenon

- Added Past President and President-Elect positions
  - Past President provided support for the first year of a President’s two-year term
  - President-Elect “shadowed” the President for the two years before rising to the role of President
  - This model was in effect for two terms
What we learned

**PRO** The Past President/President/President Elect model helps get people up to speed

**CON** The model did little to reduce the stress and burden of the Presidency:
- The need to “be present” for so many activities
- Being the sole primary “point” or contact person for so many different people
- Even with support from the Past President, being the one finally responsible for major issues
When it all came to a head ...

- President Elect chose not to assume Presidency
- Current President was unable to continue
- No other Board member was prepared to assume Presidency
Exploring the Issues

The FOL Board decided to:

• Approach this as a Critical Moment (not crisis moment) and opportunity to:
  1. Examine what we were doing and why, and
  2. Determine its alignment with Library Mission (Library was undergoing long-range planning process)
• Become more proactive rather than reactive
• Seek professional facilitation for the process
Choosing a Facilitator

Critical attributes:

- Respectful of group culture
- Flexible
- Skillful in drawing out participants
- Ability to synthesize and present outcomes

Our choice: Ambika Sambasivan of Fruitfly Consulting
Consulting GOAL

- Initiate process of developing a longer-term vision - ‘proactive’ rather than “reactive” planning
- Stimulate discussions regarding division of responsibility between Library and FOL
- Create a ‘safe space’ to discuss and prioritize current FOL programs/activities in relation to organizational mission
- Encourage examination of why potential candidates reject role of President (issues underlying the leadership crisis)
- Initiate discussions about ‘ideal’ qualities and skills to fulfill FOL Presidency (to address the lack of succession planning)
- Stimulate development of interim leadership solutions
Two-session process and debrief

- Structured and focused
- Minimized distractions
- Productive exercises
- Visuals to assist thought processing

Good facilitation does not offer answers or solutions
Final Facilitation Session
Defining the Model –
Throwing Caution to the Wind!

- Facilitation helped us determine that we were committed to what we were doing because it aligned with our Mission and Vision
- We realized that we had to change or risk losing FOL
- Co-Presidency still left a lot on each plate
- Let’s get crazy – let’s have a presidential team!
We didn’t know much yet, but we knew we needed... 

- To treat the model as an experiment or pilot
- Be flexible in our pilot year
- Our other Board colleagues to also be flexible
- To report back to the Board on the model
- The Board to give us feedback
Benefits of a President Team

• More minds tuned to FOL programs and issues
• Pre-Board meetings, as needed, to hash over important issues
• More people learning about more aspects of the FOL
• More fertile discussions about what the FOL is doing and where it is going
Changes So Far

• Original responsibility areas of the Quads
  – Some areas ended up fitting better under a different person due to interest and expertise
  – Some areas ended up being more or less demanding

• Personnel changes
  – Kathy Adam Browne will step down in January and Michele Gorab will become a Quad
Other Changes Post-Facilitation

• Simplifying - Yearly Volunteer Thank You Event discontinued due to low attendance
• Purchased a banner recognizing volunteers for display at the Library in lieu of event
• FOL Board members now attend Board of Trustee monthly meetings to better understand how the FOL may align with or assist in their work
• Ongoing engagement with Library staff regarding its long-range plan results to be proactive to their ideas and needs
If you’re interested in a Team Leadership Model ...

- The importance of an exploratory process
- The value of a neutral facilitator
- The critical role of flexibility on EVERYONE’S part
- The value of a “pilot” approach
- The absolute necessity of open communication
MANY THANKS to our wonderful facilitator

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