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A CASE STUDY IN THE EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP SERIES

Bankruptcy? Not An Option: Rescue Of A Nonprofit Organization

Author: M. Louise Walters, PhDC, MSM, BS, IOM

Editor: William R. Griffin, JD, MSM, MS, BS

The Leadership Center
10 Highgate Lane
Savannah, GA 31411 USA
1.912.349.7989
www.theleadershipcenter.com

CASE STUDY
Bankruptcy? Not An Option: Rescue Of A Nonprofit Organization

This real-life case study is part of The Excellence In Leadership series that addresses leadership, human resources, and other timely topics authored by M. Louise Walters, PhDC and William R. Griffin, JD of The Leadership Center. Titles include:

- Bankruptcy? Not An Option: Rescue Of A Nonprofit Organization
- Camille's WorldSafe Conundrum: What Should Be Done About Karen Brooks?
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These case studies are published by The Leadership Center (www.theleadershipcenter.com). Louise Walters and Bill Griffin are available to give live presentations and training on these and many other topics.

ABSTRACT

This is a real-life scenario paper that discusses the theories of change management. It follows up with a detailed example of how someone from outside discovered that a non-profit organization was in deep financial trouble. It describes how the organization crafted and implemented a turnaround plan that allowed the organization to stay in business.

Keywords: change, values, beliefs, artifact, turnaround

INTRODUCTION

In his book, *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian diplomat, politician, historian, philosopher, writer, playwright and poet of the Renaissance period, addresses a 'new order of things' – the term which today is synonymous with our interpretation of 'change.'

Most literature discusses change in for-profit organizations. Change is also found in nonprofit groups.

Change is not always positive. Downsizing and consolidation are but two types of changes that could be viewed as negative; although too much growth too quickly could be viewed as a negative change as well. Executives and boards of directors must effectively manage both positive and negative change. Machiavelli's caveat about initiating a 'new order of things' is prudent, although there are times when there are few options but change.

DEFINITIONS

This case study of change employs some definitions. The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2019) defines *culture* as "…the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization …" (Merriam-Webster 2010). Organizational terms used in this paper include:

"It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things."

Niccolo Machiavelli
1513

- ***VALUES***
  An example of this is the plaque on the office wall that declares, "We value hard work, fair and honest dealings, and the production of quality products."

- ***BELIEFS***
  Examples of this include an employee's belief that the boss is untrustworthy and difficult to work with, or that a newly developed membership recruitment campaign is a good investment because it will generate a large number of new members.

- ***SYMBOLS***
  An example of this is the business practice of "casual Friday" where employees may choose to trade business-like attire for more casual wear in exchange for a modest monetary contribution to a charity.

- ***ARTIFACTS***
  Examples of this include a collection of the organization's curated bric-a-brac that resides in a well-appointed executive office; or a hallway that showcases framed photographs taken of each of the Association's board chairs during their term of office. Random House Publishing displays first edition books framed in shadow boxes scattered throughout its hallways. The California Pharmacists Association has lined its Board of Directors conference room walls with antique apothecary jars, scales, and vials.

- ***TURNAROUND***
  An effort to save an organization that has run into trouble -- usually financial trouble. It may include corrective actions that are far outside the envelope of behavior in a healthy company.

CONFRONTING A PROBLEM SITUATION

(NOTE: To ensure confidentiality, names have been changed or the individuals are referred to by the position held in the Association; and the city where the Association is located is not identified. The organization, referred to now as the "ABC Association," is real, and is operating.)

To use a general medical analogy, organization assessments 'take the temperature of the organization.' The tools used will vary depending on the organization and their issue(s). Consider the ABC Association:

The ABC Association is a non-profit 501(c)(6) business league tax exempt organization. It has 920 members. ABC prides itself on being the vanguard of its industry. The mission of the ABC Association is to promote and preserve the ability of its members to conduct business. ABC operates on funds generated from membership dues, checking account interest, and fundraising activities (seminars, expositions, events). ABC has a paid staff that includes a chief executive officer (CEO), an office manager/bookkeeper, and two membership representatives. A volunteer board of directors is its governing body.

During the regular board of directors meeting on the third Friday morning of the month, Jane, the organization's CEO, informed the board members that she had accepted a similar CEO position with a larger organization in another area of the state. She presented her letter of resignation which included giving two weeks' notice. Two weeks was a short time frame between the board meeting and the last day Jane would be with the ABC organization. ABC needed to find a replacement – and fast. An interim CEO would keep the organization going and would provide some 'breathing room' so the board could conduct a meaningful search for a qualified replacement.

A surprise resignation

Henry, the board chair (the chief elected volunteer) of the ABC Association approached the XYZ organization management firm about providing interim management services.

Discussion was held about the needs of the ABC Association. Terms were agreed upon, and the XYZ firm was retained. The benefit of contracting with an association management company is that the management company offers a full array of management services and can tailor those services to the needs of the client.

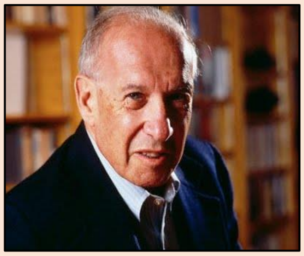
Emily, one of the XYZ management company's top account executives, was assigned to the ABC Association as its interim CEO. The official start date of the contract was the Monday after Jane's departure. However, it was agreed that on the afternoon of Jane's last day, Henry would introduce Emily to the staff, and she would then meet with Jane.

"The enlightened ruler is heedful, and the good general full of caution. Victory usually goes to the army who has better trained officers and men."

Sun Tzu
6th Century BCE

In her initial introductory review Emily spent considerable time with Jane, the outgoing CEO. Together they reviewed files and correspondence. Emily was particularly interested in ABC's financial position, including the computer-generated accounts receivable and accounts payable reports.

Jane described the accounting process that the organization used. All incoming funds (dues payments from members and checks from events) were immediately turned over to the bookkeeper to record and deposit. Accounts payable went into a drawer in the CEO's desk which was the 'holding pen' for all bills received during the month. Jane explained that at the end of the month, she would give the accounts payable folder to the bookkeeper who entered the bills into the bookkeeping program. Then, payment checks were



"… the first and most difficult job in decision-making is always to find the right question. And there is rarely one 'right answer' in a business situation; at best there is a range of alternatives, each with distinct risks of its own and none completely 'solving' the problem."

Peter Drucker
1955

authorized, printed, signed, and mailed. The system was simple, although it was a little too loosey-goosey for Emily's comfort level. At the time of the review, the 'bill drawer' included approximately $2,500 of accounts payable items. That Friday was Jane's last day of work with the ABC Association.

Over the weekend, Emily kept thinking about the 'bill drawer.' She kept wondering why the accounts payable process was different than the accounts receivable process. The accounts receivable were entered into the bookkeeping system the day that bills and notices were sent out. However, accounts payable were not entered into the bookkeeping system on the day they were received. Instead, accounts payable were entered into the bookkeeping system when Jane decided it was time to pay them. Emily kept wondering "why?"

In 1955, management author Peter Drucker said, "… the first and most difficult job in decision-making is always to find the right question. And there is rarely one 'right answer' in a business situation; at best there is a range of alternatives, each with distinct risks of its own and none completely 'solving' the problem" (Drucker, 1955). An organization assessment was the first thing to do, so bright and early on Monday morning, Emily arrived at the ABC offices and held get-acquainted group meetings with the staff. She then followed up by holding one-on-one sessions with each staff member. Later that morning, Emily also touched bases with Henry, ABC's board chair, and provided a brief update of her initial organization assessment.

Returning from lunch after a busy morning of meetings and telephone calls, Emily found that the day's postal mail had arrived. It was placed unopened in a file folder on her desk waiting for her to open, review and route. Emily wondered why the mail was unopened. She asked the bookkeeper and was told those were Jane's instructions.

Opening the mail, Emily was disappointed to find only three membership dues checks totaling $975. The rest of the mail included over a dozen bills – many Emily didn't recall seeing when she and Jane reviewed the accounts payable in the 'bill drawer.' Adding up the payables that had arrived in Monday's mail, Emily's concern began to increase. The bills amounted to $6,500.

Her concern skyrocketed as Emily slid open the bill drawer where the former CEO had stored the payables file. Emily was shocked to find that, instead of the $2,500 in accounts payable that she and Jane had reviewed the previous Friday, the drawer now contained a file folder four inches thick stuffed with bills that totaled in excess of $20,000. Most were at least ninety days overdue. Emily's instincts about the 'bill drawer' had been right on target.

A surprise stack of unpaid bills

Emily surmised that Jane had been opening the mail, pulling out the bills, hiding them somewhere (other than in the bill drawer), then giving some of them to the bookkeeper at the end of the month. Clearly, the organization's financial procedures were far too casual and did not comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). This situation was compounded by the fact that the organization did not have enough money in the bank to pay its bills. The typical bank balance was $5,000. When Emily contacted the bank, she learned that the checking account balance was $1,250. If a major cash infusion didn't occur in the next ten business days, ABC wouldn't even have enough funds to pay the staff much less any outstanding bills.

Emily next accessed the monthly financial report generated for the prior week's board meeting. The report showed the bills payable that had been entered into the computer. But what the report didn't show were all the bills that that suddenly materialized and made up the four-inch pile of bills found in the 'bill drawer' that Monday. Instead of being in sound financial condition as Jane had led Emily and the board to believe, ABC was in serious financial trouble. And it seemed that the only person who knew it (besides Emily) was Jane, ABC's former CEO – who had just left town.

Emily telephoned Thomas, the organization's treasurer, and set up an emergency meeting for that afternoon. When they met, Emily explained to Thomas that she had discovered the stack of unpaid bills totaling almost $30,000 which had inexplicably materialized in the 'bill drawer.' As they reviewed each bill, it became apparent that most of the debt was for renovations. But "Renovations of what?" Emily asked.

Emily was in for another surprise. In an 'oh, by the way' moment, Thomas mentioned that ABC owned a $250,000 asset -- the Association's new building *(artifact)*. But ABC also owed $250,000 in loans used to purchase the Association's new building. Jane had convinced

With a $250,000 bank loan, the ABC Association bought its own building

the board of directors that ABC needed to own its own building instead of leasing office space. Six months earlier, ABC had purchased a vacant building, renovated it, and moved in. The plan was to lease the unused space that ABC didn't anticipate using. With a loan from the seller and another from the bank, leasing out the space would cover the remaining portion of the funding needed to help pay down the $250,000 that the Association financed for twenty years.

To pay off the loans, Jane sold the board of directors on the idea of a 'Make A Payment & Reduce The Debt' campaign. Members and others could choose among 240 monthly payments ranging from $2,500 for payment #1 to $24.99 for payment #240. In other words, when the member wrote a $1,250 check during the 'Make A Payment' campaign to pay for month #120 of the loan, the funds were to be placed in a segregated interest-bearing account until it was month #120. Then, the ABC Association would use the original $1,250 principal augmented with the interest earned over ten years to offset payment #120.

Another surprise: $30,000 of unauthorized renovation bills

The bad news was that the organization had fallen far short of its goal of raising its $250,000. Although Jane was very enthusiastic about the project, many members were skeptical about the plan and were reluctant to participate. Consequently, there wasn't as much buy-in as Jane had originally forecast.

ABC Association member and stakeholder concerns notwithstanding, Jane bulldozed ahead anyway and made extensive and expensive renovations to the facility instead of focusing on identifying a reliable lessee to occupy the extra space and help pay for part of the building. When the bills started arriving, Jane began looking for another job, meanwhile hiding the bills.

When the dust all settled, renovations to the building totaled over $30,000. Most bills had not yet been paid and many were over 90 days past due. In fact, the majority of the bills weren't even entered into the bookkeeping system. With a sinking feeling, Emily quickly realized that the monthly loan payments and the costs of the improvements coupled with the day-to-day operating expenses comprised most of the past due bills in the four-inch thick folder.

THE PLAN FOR CHANGE

(NOTE: Not all organizational change is positive – there can be negative change, too. Some of what Emily and the ABC Association were facing was negative.)

Emily and Thomas immediately met with board chair Henry. The trio then met with the board chair-elect and the past board chair. Together they hammered out a plan to eliminate the debt.

In the past, the board relied on the CEO to make operational decisions. The board placed its faith in Jane to operate in an above-board and honorable fashion. However, because the Association did not have an adequate system of financial controls, Jane was able to 'brush under the rug' some major problems. One way of describing the situation is that the board abdicated its responsibility to its hired chief executive officer -- a bad business practice. The board's over-reliance on and over-confidence placed in Jane were the key elements in the financial distress of the organization. Sadly, these situations are not uncommon occurrences in non-profit organizations.

Based on her deep experience as a CEO of a variety of nonprofit organizations, Emily knew it was critical to move quickly and manage this financially 'negative change' into a financially 'positive win' for ABC. The Association desperately needed a paradigm shift. Peter Drucker (1955) states the importance of "…developing alternative solutions; determining their advantages and disadvantages, their prospective gains, risks and costs, their efforts, their impacts and their timing."

The rescue strategy was to be upfront and communicate with the members of ABC, the Association's creditors, and the general public. That required a commitment by the board and staff to re-energize the organization. It also required a recommitment by the board to step up and lead the organization.

In his 6th century BCE writings titled *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu, a Chinese military general and strategist, writer, and philosopher who lived in the Eastern Zhou period of ancient China, said "Leadership causes people to follow their superiors willingly" (Sun Tzu, 6th Century, BCE). The ABC Association's board of directors rose to the challenge and put Sun Tzu's theory into place. By mid-week, Emily and Thomas, the treasurer, had spoken with every creditor and had negotiated new payment terms and schedules. All creditors were very cooperative. Some creditors were kind enough to forgive a part of or all of the debt.

Then, initial letters stating the problem and outlining solutions were sent to each of the 920

"…all people who are affected by change experience some emotional turmoil. Even changes that appear to be 'positive' or 'rational' involve loss and uncertainty. Nevertheless, for a number of different reasons, individuals or groups can react very differently to change – from passively resisting it, to aggressively trying to undermine it, to sincerely embracing it."

John Kotter (l)
Leonard Schlesinger (r)
2008

members as well as other stakeholders. These were followed up with special monthly update letters to all members and stakeholders. Over the course of the next 24 months, a number of members privately told Emily they did not have much trust in Jane (*beliefs*), and they thought her agenda had been at odds with theirs (*values*) for some time which is why they did not participate in Jane's 'Make A Payment' plan.

Management authors John P. Kotter and Leonard A. Schlesinger (2008) addressed the subject of change in an article in the *Harvard Business Review* this way: "…all people who are affected by change experience some emotional turmoil.

Even changes that appear to be ‘positive’ or ‘rational’ involve loss and uncertainty. Nevertheless, for a number of different reasons, individuals and / or groups can react very differently to change – from passively resisting it, to aggressively trying to undermine it, or to sincerely embracing it.”

THE WALTERS INFINITE CIRCULAR ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

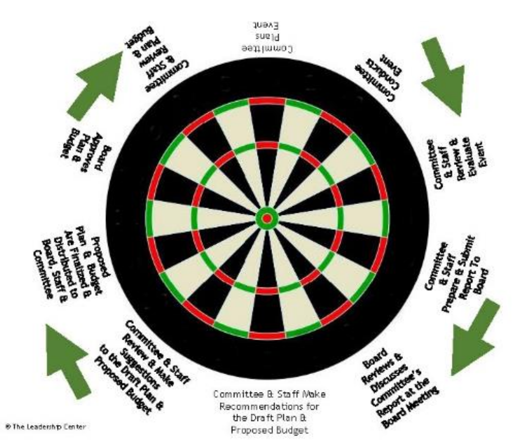


FIGURE 1 – Full Page Illustration On Page 11

Following discovery of the financial ‘can of worms,’ Emily worked with the board, officers, and staff to develop and implement several changes (*turnaround*).

- It was determined that there was no need to amend the corporate charter. It was agreed to review and modify the bylaws and other governance documents. There was also a need to create a written operating document, so Emily developed a manual of operating procedures. She also created a policy manual by combing through the Association’s files.

- At the board level and committee level, training was conducted. Emily and Henry, ABC’s board chair, used a newly created organization chart coupled with job descriptions to explain what the board members were supposed to do, what the officers were supposed to do, and what the committee chairs and committees were supposed to do. The board was also given an orientation on what the staff responsibilities were.

- Transparent financial procedures were instituted that separated tasks (i.e., a set of checks and balances was instituted). Responsibilities were defined for the treasurer (a volunteer board member) and the staff members who were involved in financial processing. To prevent one person from hiding accounts payable, two people opened the mail, and each bill was immediately entered into the accounts payable section of the bookkeeping system.

- An audit using an impartial CPA firm was conducted immediately and each year thereafter.

- The annual budgeting process was completely revised. The process was driven by a newly adopted Walters Committee Activity Evaluation & Recommendation Form which was coupled with the Walters Infinite Circular Planning Framework. The proposed budget was no longer developed by the CEO and merely “rubber stamped” by the board. Instead, the process was led by Thomas, the treasurer, and ABC’s newly established finance committee.

- In conducting her operational review, Emily discovered that all the Association members had the same membership anniversary date: March 1. Emily discovered that a few years earlier, ABC decided to place all the members on the same annual dues renewal date because it accomplished two things:
  1.) A large in-flux of membership dues dollars early in the year allowed ABC to squirrel away most of the funds into a savings / investment account to earn interest income. Each month, ABC would draw the equivalent of one month’s funds to cover that month’s expenses.
  2.) Keeping track of the hundreds of membership dues transactions was assumed to somehow be better and less complicated. But in doing so it was necessary that ABC use accrual accounting where all income (dues, events, and so on) is equally spread over twelve months.

  It’s a good process, assuming that one month’s income is sufficient to cover one month’s expenditures. Going over-board on a number of expenses (including the office renovation) could quickly put the Association in financial jeopardy. And that’s exactly what happened.

When Emily and Thomas, ABC's treasurer, recommended that ABC adopt a cash-based method of accounting, the board agreed. Fortunately, the Association's membership representatives kept detailed records, including the date each member joined, so Emily and Thomas were able to construct an updated dues schedule.

As they were reviewing the members' record and as they began their discussion of the budget, Emily and Thomas noticed another issue: the Association had not increased membership dues for four years. Emily, a proponent of zero-based budgeting, she worked with Thomas and the finance committee to establish a preliminary budget and then develop a membership dues schedule both of which were presented to the board of directors. Both were unanimously approved on an interim basis until ABC held its strategic planning session.

- A hold was put on hiring a permanent CEO until the Association could solve its financial problems and present a positive financial position to potential candidates.

- Repayment plans and terms with creditors were established (as discussed earlier).

- A financial belt-tightening program was implemented. For example, a salary freeze was imposed, the travel budget was reduced, and all events were required to be at least revenue neutral.

- Issuing of all checks required two signatures: The CEO and either the board chair or treasurer.

- No contracts could be entered into without signature of the board chair and CEO. The board would ratify actions to sign contracts.

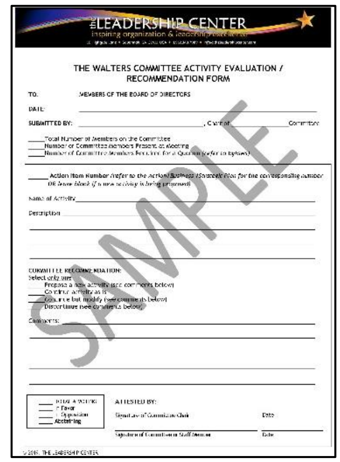
- Some stakeholders contributed to the 'Make A Payment' campaign anyway.

- Some members voluntarily doubled their annual membership dues in an effort to reduce the Association's financial burden.

- Revenue sources other than membership dues were explored. Two new revenue generating events were created which helped whittle down the debt.

- As part of the strategic plan, all committees and their assigned staff members met and, using the Walters Committee Review & Recommendation Form, discussed, evaluated, and prepared written recommendations about whether to:
  1.) Keep the activity as is;
  2.) Keep the activity but make specific changes;
  3.) Replace the current activity with a new activity; or
  4.) Discontinue.

  Then, the forms submitted by each committee were reviewed by Emily, Thomas, the treasurer, and the finance committee. The information was then compiled into a proposed budget. The board of directors reviewed the proposed budget, made revisions as appropriate, and approved the budget. The approved budget was used by the committees and staff to plan and manage their work during the year.



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THE WALTERS COMMITTEE ACTIVITY EVALUATION / RECOMMENDATION FORM

TO: MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DATE:
SUBMITTED BY: ____________, Chair of ____________ Committee

____ Total Number of Members on the Committee
____ Number of Committee Members Present at Meeting
____ Number of Committee Members Required for a Quorum *(refer to bylaws)*

____ Action Item Number *(refer to the Action/Business /Strategic Plan for the corresponding number OR leave blank if a new activity is being proposed)*

Name of Activity
Description

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:
Select only one:
____ Propose a new activity (see comments below)
____ Continue activity as is
____ Continue but modify (see comments below)
____ Discontinue (see comments below)

Comments:

____ TOTAL # VOTING
____ # Favor
____ # Opposition
____ Abstaining

ATTESTED BY:
Signature of Committee Chair — Date
Signature of Committee Staff Member — Date

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FIGURE 2 -Full Page Illustration On Page 12

- ABC's building was eventually sold. The funds from the sale of the building were just enough to pay off the loan from the bank and the loan from the seller.

- In the capacity of a tenant, the Association moved into a comfortable suite of offices. The cost of the office space lease was absorbed by the building owner.

LESSONS LEARNED & CONCLUSIONS

It took two years of hard and concentrated work by the members, board, staff, and Emily to move the organization into a positive financial position. Along the way, a renewed sense of commitment grew, and a new hands-on philosophy was developed.

The Association regained its vanguard position, and today it is once again an industry leader.

Sometimes organizations get into trouble. This can happen when board members, officers, committee chairs, committee members, and / or paid staff do not have a clear understanding of the organization and of their responsibilities.

Ongoing training and orientation are necessary at all levels.

Board members and committee members must be mindful to not abdicate their responsibilities to staff.

Board and committee members must stay engaged by showing up and participating at every meeting.

There should be a deliberate, methodical annual budgeting process.

Staff members and committees should not spend any Association money that has not been approved by the board.

Each month, the treasurer should review bank statements, accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash position, loan balances, and other important indicators of financial health.

The treasurer should meet monthly with appropriate staff members to review the organization's financial position. Based on these reviews, the treasurer should provide a written report to accompany the financial report which the board members receive every month.

Assignments of responsibility, both at the board and staff levels, must be based on the qualifications of the person. It is dangerous to assign management of a construction project to a person who has no experience in that arena.

It is dangerous to assign management of a costly project or event to someone who has no experience in that area.

Checks and balances are measures organizations can take to preventive one person (or more) from damaging the organization due to inadequate skill, capability, or intent.

FIGURE 1 – The Walters Infinite Circular Organizational Framework

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THE WALTERS INFINITE CIRCULAR OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK©

The *Walters Infinite Circular Operational Framework©* was created by M. Louise Walters, PhDC, as an efficient way to address the process of organizational planning, implementation, and evaluation (strategic, business, or otherwise). Using the example of a dart board, it doesn't matter where a dart lands on the board. Simply start from that point and move forward in a clockwise direction around the *Walters Infinite Circular Planning Framework©*. Repeat. Repeat. Keep repeating.

By using the *Walters Infinite Circular Operational Framework©*, organizations that undertake planning (strategic, business, or otherwise) can build in ways that continuously measure operational success. That way, if adjustments are needed, they can be made immediately. Then, when it is budget and planning time, the foundational measurements and evaluations have already been done, as have the recommendations. That is why planning (strategic, business, or otherwise) can benefit by using the *Walters Infinite Circular Operational Framework©* to:

PLAN CONDUCT EVALUATE REPORT DISCUSS RECOMMEND SUGGEST FINALIZE APPROVE REVIEW

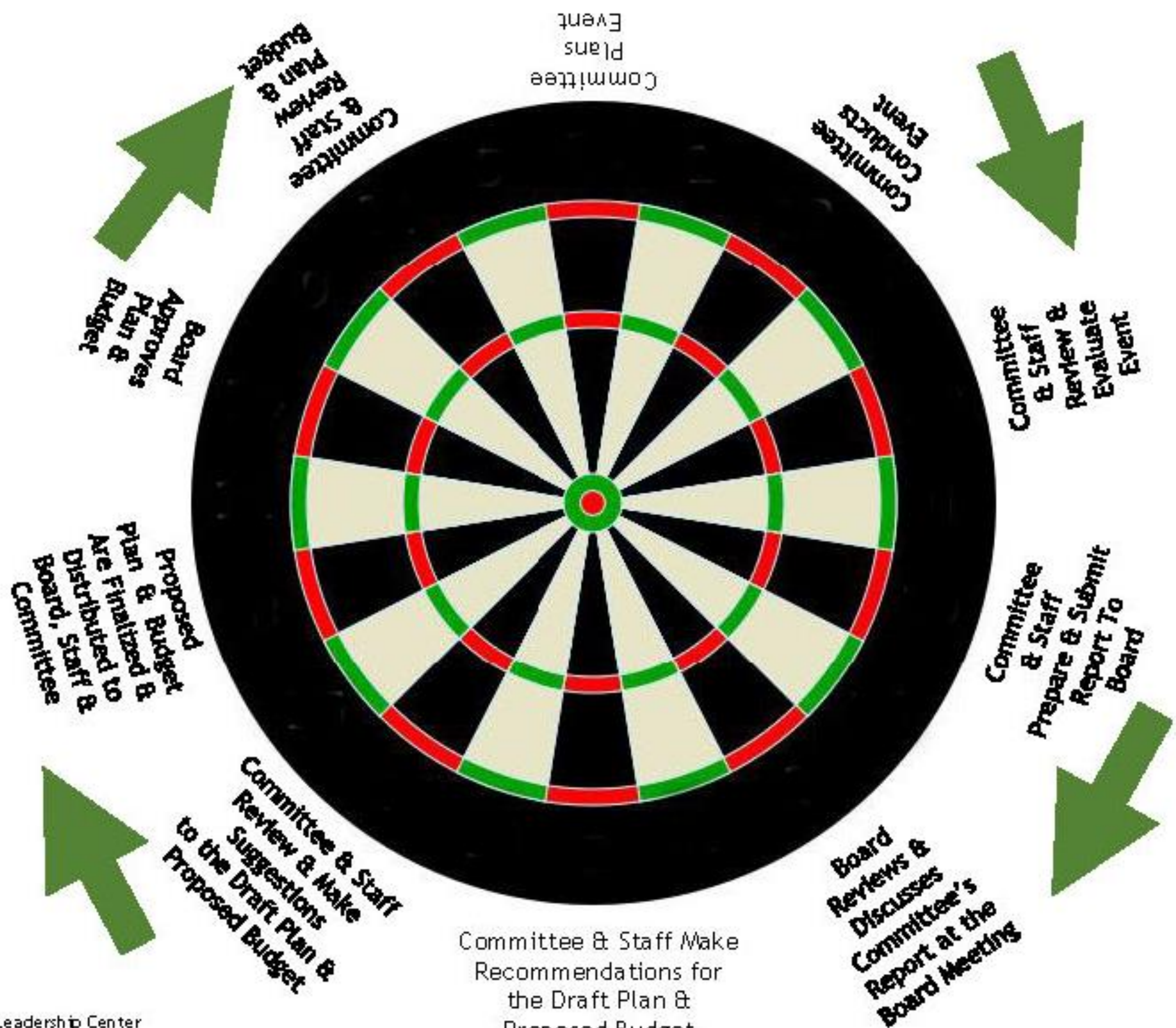

FIGURE 2 – The Walters Committee Activity Evaluation / Recommendation Form

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TO: MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DATE: ______________________________

SUBMITTED BY: ______________________________, Chair of ______________Committee

_____Total Number of Members on the Committee
_____Number of Committee Members Present at Meeting
_____Number of Committee Members Required for a Quorum *(refer to bylaws)*

_____ **Action Item Number** *(refer to the Action/Business /Strategic Plan for the corresponding number OR leave blank if a new activity is being proposed)*

Name of Activity ______________________________

Description ______________________________

____

____

____

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:
Select only one
_____Propose a new activity (see comments below)
_____Continue activity as is
_____Continue but modify (see comments below)
_____Discontinue (see comments below)

Comments: ______________________________

____

____

____

____

_____ TOTAL # VOTING
_____ In Favor
_____ In Opposition
_____ Abstaining

ATTESTED BY:

______________________________ ______________
Signature of Committee Chair Date

______________________________ ______________
Signature of Committee or Staff Member Date

SAMPLE

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The contents of this paper were developed to document the results of graduate study research at National American University.

M. LOUISE WALTERS, PhDC, MSM, BS, IOM - author

Louise Walters is chairwoman of the board, Chief Executive Officer and majority owner of The Leadership Center. She earned her AA (2008) and BS (2010) degrees in Legal Studies followed by a Master of Management degree (2012) all from National American University. In 2012, she began her Doctoral program in Organizational Leadership at Capella University. She completed her Doctoral course work and her comprehensive exam in 2015. Her Doctoral dissertation (seminal research titled *The Social Exchange Dance: Nonprofit CEO Perceptions of Board Chairs and Organizational Impacts*) was completed in 2019.

The Leadership Center, LLC, is certified as a woman-owned small business enterprise. It is the successor organization to The MacWalters Company, Inc., an association management firm headquartered in Sacramento, CA. For a dozen years, Louise (as co-owner and CEO) and her staff provided a complete array of management services to professional societies, trade associations, and foundations (financial management, management audits, organization assessments, governance, organization re-engineering, leadership development, internal and external communication, membership management, fund raising, legislative advocacy, political campaigns, and training). The organization described in this case study was one of her clients.

WILLIAM R. GRIFFIN, JD, MSM, MSE, BS - editor

Bill Griffin is vice chairman of the board, Chief Operating Officer, and minority owner of The Leadership Center. He has been a professional communicator (trainer, writer, and editor) on technical, legal and business topics since 1970. His academic degrees include a Juris Doctorate, a Master's degree in Management, a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering, and a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering.

Bill is a professional trainer and instructor. He is an adjunct professor for several universities in Savannah, GA. Courses Bill has taught include Management of Nonprofit Organizations, Business Ethics, Ethics in Government, Law and Ethics in Private Security, Business Law, Employment Law, Operations Management, Project Management, Management of Human Services Organizations, Industrial Math and Introduction to Engineering. For nine years he was Professor of Business and led undergraduate programs in Business Administration, Applied Management and Organizational Leadership, along with on-campus MBA and Master of Management programs. He has taught four dozen different courses in business, management, math, science and law (including courses in Leadership, Finance, and Corporations Law). He taught for Oglala (SD) Lakota College (Business Finance), and two universities in California: Whittier Law School (Corporations Law), and Western States Law School (Administrative Law).

Bill worked in industry and government for over thirty years, mostly in the professional services industry. He helped launch new companies, departments, offices and project teams. He served in a middle management role during three successful turnarounds at his engineering employers, and he was a top manager during a successful turnaround in a utility services/ software development company. Bill has been a manager and volunteer for trade associations and professional societies. He served as CEO during the 18-month startup period for a national trade association. He was a founder, board member, and board secretary for the Center for Business and Economics of the Northern Plains.