

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES IN NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT

Douglas Yingling, Center for Vision Loss Testimonial

Doug is the Executive Director of the Center for Vision Loss, <http://centerforvisionloss.org/>. The Center for Vision Loss (CVL) provides a comprehensive set of preventative, rehabilitative, support and social services enabling blind and visually impaired clients to achieve their personal goals and restore a quality of life consistent with those goals. Programs will provide a balance of independent living skills and social services to meet individual needs across a diverse client base and also help reduce the incidence of vision loss in the community through prevention of blindness and remedial eye care services. The Center for Vision Loss believes that individuals challenged by severe vision loss should not have to choose between curtailing activities they once enjoyed and retaining their independence.



This non-profit agency, a member of the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind, serves the residents of Lehigh, Northampton and Monroe Counties in eastern Pennsylvania who are blind or visually impaired so they can lead well-adjusted, rewarding and productive lives. The programs and services include: Vision Rehabilitation, Low Vision Services, Vision Help and Community Outreach. The most critical strategic issue facing Doug is positive change and organizational growth and the development of a strategic long-term plan. CVL is poised to examine opportunities for growth in program development and rekindle passions and involvement.

1. How did the Strategic Perspectives in Non-Profit Management program change your view of your career?

I was impressed by the variety and talent present in the nonprofit sector from all parts of the world. So often, for-profit business leaders are the standard that you hear about. This experience showed me accomplishments in the nonprofit sector are just as impressive. However, business models and solutions were also most instructive as applied to the challenges of the nonprofit sector. I never had a chance to study business models in this context and learned lessons I could apply.

The other part that was so helpful was the peer review sessions held by small groups in your residential area. While so many of the projects we studied demonstrated great impact and exemplary leadership, this brought it back to local applications and you also realize that many of your peers have the same struggles.

2. How are you applying what you learned?

I try to be less cautious in decision making and look for broader moves or opportunities that go beyond our ordinary scope of services.

3. Has your approach to leadership changed?

Yes, by gaining confirmation that change makes people uncomfortable yet must move the organization forward and persevering through the changes despite some discomfort.

4. How has the program changed you?

Overall, so many of the examples we learned showed that almost anything is possible. I try to keep that optimism in mind when I'm mired in day to day details – but it's a struggle!

5. What is one lesson-learned that you would like to share with other non-profit leaders in the Lehigh Valley?

I was impressed with the emphasis on sticking to your core mission and getting it right. There were many examples discussed and I think of it as we plan our programs.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

United Way of the
Greater Lehigh Valley

UnitedWayGLV.org

