

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES IN NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT

Lin Erickson, Da Vinci Science Center Testimonial

Lin is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Da Vinci Science Center in Allentown, <http://www.Davincisciencecenter.org>. The Da Vinci Science Center is a nationally-recognized science center with a mission to bring science to life and lives to science. Each year, the Center reaches over 120,000 individuals of all ages through interactive exhibits, hands-on workshops and outreach programs at school and community sites. The Center has gained national recognition from the U.S. Department of Education for a state grant entitled *The Greater Allentown Math Science Partnership*, a professional development program for teachers that links industry's regional workforce initiatives with youth and families to explore science careers.



Lin is responsible for the ongoing successful strategic leadership and management of the organization and its operations. Specific responsibilities include: leading the organization in the development and execution of strategies designed to achieve organizational growth; participating in the design and execution of fundraising and marketing strategies; formulating and prioritizing institutional/financial goals; maintaining a balanced budget and fiscally-sound operation; representing the Center to the community; motivating and inspiring employees, Trustees and volunteers in the execution of the Center's mission; and stimulating the development of an organizational culture characterized by a commitment to continuous learning, quality, integrity and mutual respect. The most critical strategic issue Lin faces is the need to maintain current operations while expanding programs for area youth, particularly underserved youth.

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

The Harvard SPNM Program reaffirmed for me the Executive Director/CEO's role in shaping the value proposition of a non-profit and making sure that the mission, goals, programs, governing structure, and funding are in alignment to support the value proposition. It also encouraged me to think more about scale and how organizations evolve over time in response to the changing environment. I am particularly interested in pursuing future opportunities to increase scale and impact.

2. How are you applying what you learned?

The Da Vinci Science Center is currently updating its strategic plan, considering changes in the regional environment since the plan's inception (2011/12), articulating a renewed vision for our future, and developing a bold plan to increase our impact in the region. Dr. V. Kasturi Rangan's definition of an operational mission is helping us articulate our primary purpose and align our planning efforts to maximize our long-term impact.

Also, immediately upon returning from the program, I shared with my entire staff Dr. Francis Frei's model for "Uncommon Service." We are utilizing her framework to think about what our customers value and prioritize investment in the customer experience to address their needs. The key takeaway from her presentation is that we need to focus in order to increase our impact. My staff is starting to repeat her mantra, "In order to be good, you have to be bad."

3. Has your approach to leadership changed?

I expanded my 'big picture' thinking skills. I think differently about the mission of non-profit organizations and investing strategically to increase their impact.

4. How has the program changed you?

The program has reframed how I think about non-profit organizations. I think more about their value propositions and how they evolve over time in response to changing environmental conditions. I often think about the non-profit leaders across the globe I met and their stories—inspiring me to 'think big' and imagine the possibilities to take bold steps to respond to changing needs in my community.

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

Focus. Define your operating mission, align what you do and the funding you pursue with your mission to achieve real results and make a difference in our community.

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