

Improving Board Communication: An Assessment of Interpersonal, Small Group and
Organizational Communication of a Ten-Month-Old Nonprofit Organization

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ABSTRACT

People who lead community organizations as volunteers may be successful by engaging in dialogue, building consensus and making decisions in order to accomplish the organization's mission. This communication audit of a 10-month-old, 17-member nonprofit group employed questionnaires, interviews and participant observation to study the idea that information members receive about interpersonal and small group communication during the study would improve the effectiveness of their meetings and decisions. Grounded in social construction and coordinated management of meaning theory (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Cronen, Barnett & Harris, 1979; Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1982; Pearce, 1989; Maside, 1990; Shotter, 1993; Miranda & Saunders, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2008), the study found that the process of the communication audit allowed board members to express their opinions to the researcher in a manner that preserved the good relations between members. Thinking and talking about the board's communication both individually and as a group allowed members to better understand the role dialogue plays in building successful outcomes. The audit resulted in a number of recommendations that, if implemented, may strengthen the organization and its ability to achieve its mission.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The Problem

People who lead community organizations as volunteers do so for a variety of reasons. It may be because of a commitment to a cause. It may be seen as an opportunity to network or to learn new skills. Countless other reasons may motivate a person to get involved. In addition to diverse motivations, people who join groups also arrive at their responsibilities in a different way from those who are hired to work for an organization. Nonprofit board members are volunteers. Some may go through an interview and selection process. Some may be chosen because of community position, skill set or socioeconomic factors. Choosing leaders is a more complicated process than simply whether a potential candidate knows how to work with others to govern.

In any case, once part of a group, people must engage in dialogue, build consensus and make decisions in order to accomplish the organization's mission. They must govern together. "People often talk past each other. Even when their conversation appears coherent and well coordinated, they may subsequently give vastly different accounts of what they were talking about and what each said" (Pearce, 1989, p. xiii). How do people learn to talk together?

The purpose of this thesis is to audit the communication of a newly formed nonprofit partnership to assess interpersonal, small group and organizational communication. The study is expected to show that the process of assessment and the information members receive about interpersonal and small group communication during the study will improve the effectiveness of their meetings and decisions. The audit also is expected to provide information that will guide future organizational communication. Fundamental to this study is the idea that people in volunteer community organization leadership positions struggle not because they don't know

how to perform their jobs, but because they do not engage in dialogue with fellow members about the organization's important issues.

Definition of Terms

Board: An official group of persons who direct or supervise some activity.

External communication: Written materials and/or spoken messages created and disseminated by an organization through various channels with the purpose of providing information to audiences outside of the organization.

Internal communication: Written materials and/or spoken messages created and disseminated by an organization through various channels with the purpose of providing information to people who are part of the organization.

Nonprofit organization: An organization not established for the purpose of making a profit. The *Nonprofit Almanac 2008* reported that approximately 1.4 million nonprofit organizations were registered with the IRS in 2005 (Urban Institute, 2008, p. 1). Registered nonprofit organizations are divided into three groups: 501(c)(3) public charities, 501(c)(3) private foundations, and “other” nonprofit organizations. In addition to these three categories tracked by the IRS, there also are an unknown number of small community groups and partnerships across the U.S. The subject of this study falls into this fourth category.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Theoretical Basis

To accomplish a nonprofit organization's mission, a group of individuals must engage in dialogue, build consensus, make decisions, and govern together. They must learn to talk together. According to social constructionists, meaning is produced through the words, symbols and other constructs people create during interaction. That is, "The central premise of social constructionism is that meaning is not inherent" (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 447). One of the earliest books about social construction was written by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Since that time many communication theorists (e.g. Cronen, Barnett & Harris, 1979; Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1982; Pearce, 1989; Maside, 1990; Shotter, 1993; Miranda & Saunders, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2008) have used social construction to underpin their ideas about how communication works. The view that people in conversation build shared meanings is central to the study of how members of a nonprofit board communicate.

Integrating Theory and Practice with Coordinated Management of Meaning

Pearce and Cronen's Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (1980) is grounded in social constructionist thought. Rather than seeing communication as a singular act, Pearce and Cronen have taken the position that "persons live in communication rather than somehow standing outside it and 'using' communication for other purposes" (Pearce, 1989, p. xv). Pearce's premise was that people may communicate differently, but more importantly they also "experience different ways of being human because they communicate differently" (p. xvi). CMM is described as "practical" in the sense that it "stems from and leads to human action" (Cronen, Pearce & Harris, 1979, p. 24). Buttle described CMM as a theory that "synthesizes elements of philosophical pragmatism, rules theory, systems theory and later Wittgensteinian

language philosophy” (Buttle, 1993, p. 76). CMM also is described as theory and practice being fully integrated (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 40).

Key CMM concepts include the communication perspective, coherence, coordination and mystery. According to Pearce and Pearce, the most basic of these four is the communication perspective (p. 40). In an earlier work, Pearce (1989) described the communication perspective as a way of viewing human activity rather than a subset of human activity; “a process rather than a thing” (Pearce, 1989, p. 23). The components of the communication perspective are form, rather than topic; realizing that communication is substantial and its properties have consequences; and treating beliefs, personalities, attitudes, power relationships, social structures, economic structures and the like as made not found (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 40-42). Form is demonstrated with such questions as “Who is included in the conversation and who is not?” “Where do conversations occur: during the board meeting or in the parking lot afterwards?” “How would decisions be different if everyone’s voice was heard?” How a question is phrased makes a difference when considering substance and consequences of communication. How a person responds also affects the discussion as does counter statements or questions; tone of voice; timing; pattern of who talks next and who responds to whom (p. 42). The communication perspective sees “meanings, personalities, acts, institutions, and so forth as being constituted in communication, and of specific messages as responding to and eliciting other messages” (p. 43).

Pearce and Pearce saw people in conversation as storytellers. They used the term coherence, the second concept of CMM, to describe people making meaning together through the stories they tell. “The term coherence is used to designate human activity as meaning-making, not as a judgment about the success of that process” (p. 47). Listening to people’s conversations to assess the way meaning is being made is not always an easy process.

As all researchers who have studied transcripts of actual conversations know, people seldom say all that they expect other people to hear them as having said, and sometimes say something quite different from what they expect to be heard as having said, but usually treat others as if they are responding to what they intended to be heard as having said (p. 47).

That is one reason why a facilitator is helpful in working with groups who are trying to improve their ability to talk together. A facilitator can ask probing questions and work with speakers to fill in those gaps to enrich the conversation.

The term “coordination,” the third concept of CMM, is used to recognize the “social nature of communication” and how humans in conversation work to align actions as they “respond to and elicit responses from others” (p. 51). Many times people respond in old, expected patterns during conversation. People who want more from a discussion can look for new ways to interact that may be more inviting to others in an effort to bring forth new ideas or invite new people or new thinking into a conversation.

Mystery, the fourth concept of CMM, is about being open to novelty and acknowledgement of limits. Pearce and Pearce contended that mystery is the most relevant to understanding dialogic communication. They referenced “acting like a native” and described how “natives” use particular stories to define “common sense,” to achieve coherence their telling of history, and to coordinate nominations, differentiations and evaluations (p. 52). Mystery is the reminder that all of these stories are made, not found. They described our ability to communicate itself as mysterious.

When something is named, language seduces us to forget all the other names that might have been used and all the other stories in which it might have been included. But

moving beyond the linguistic function of naming, the communicative act of making speech acts requires not only a story, but the *telling* of a story—and this story is told by a specific person, in a specific language (dialect and all), and is told in a specific time and place (limited by acoustics, interrupted by other storytellers, etc.). Further speech acts are not completed until they are responded to, and that response elicits another, and so on (p. 53).

The issue of improved discussions at nonprofit board meetings can be addressed through the ideas of CMM. By making board members aware of coherence, coordination and mystery as well as taking a communication perspective, talk at board meetings can take on a new importance. People may develop a new understanding about how these discussions are a way to build something together.

Cultural Approach to Studying Organizational Communication

The cultural approach as described by Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1983) also speaks to nonprofit board issues. The authors suggested that communication be thought of as language use in a tribe-like atmosphere rather than information transfer by computer-like machines. They described communication as a process, but also suggested that culture be thought of as “a social construction continually reconstructed” (p. 128). The authors suggest that communication in organizations be considered as cultural “performances” with performance taking the meaning of “accomplishing” (p. 129). Taking this idea further, they suggested that members of the organization “choose to act in ways which reflect the social conventions of other organization members” and that those performances are “situationally relative and variable” (p. 130). Organizational performances also are interactional, contextual and episodic. Meaning is produced through the words, symbols and other constructs people use. According to the cultural

approach to organizational communication, like interpersonal communication, people supply meaning through our interactions with others, which provides another way for people to reflect on the time spent together in board meetings.

Review of the Literature

Nonprofit Organizations

Research specifically concerning communication among nonprofit board members is limited. Lewis (2005) suggested that with 1.4 million registered nonprofits in the United States alone, organizational communication scholars have not paid significant theoretical attention to nonprofits and should do so (p. 241). She provided four potential starting points: social capital; mission, effectiveness and accountability; governance and decision making; and volunteer relationship. She suggested that studying nonprofits will allow opportunities to validate and/or question theoretical assumptions. According to Lewis, these assumptions have thus far largely been based “on the empirical picture presented in corporate organizations” (p. 262). Her idea that organizational scholars can assist with issues such as communication flow, decision-making quality and “what communicative structures and practices spawn participation, identification, commitment, and ultimately social capital” (p. 248), suggested an opportunity to research nonprofit board communication.

Seibold, Myers & Sunwolf (1996) also spoke to the lack of research and theories about small group communication. The authors discussed influence as a result of group interaction and took the position that few studies in this area actually study members’ communication. They surmised that this was the case because “few researchers equate information with communication and/or pay little attention to the form, function, and response to message exchanges in group decision making” (p. 243).

This is not to say that nonprofit organizations don't have support. A Google search for "nonprofit board support" in January 2009 provided 442,000 hits in .24 seconds. One could find everything from governance and management advice, fund raising help, training, to suggestions for communicating with external audiences. A great deal has been written about the importance of nonprofit organization communication to external stakeholders. Also available is information about communication between board members and staff along with various how-to's, quick tips and the like. But research about communication between board members is scarce.

Organizational Development Consultant Anne Gardon said, "Nonprofit organizations spend significant time and resources convening boards of directors with mixed results" (Gardon, 2001, p. 1). She suggested board development work involving the organization's purpose, its community and its evolution as well as issues of "diversity and stakeholder control" (p. 2).

Promoting the "Generative Mode." Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005) suggested adding a third mode of running a board. Fiduciary and strategic management are covered in modes one and two. They called this third mode about leadership the "generative mode" (p. 7). The authors said that "Robert's Rules of Order" work well for discourse in Mode I, the board's fiduciary role, and Mode II, its mission and strategic role. They submit that this type of rational thinking, however, does not work well for Mode III (p. 120). With Mode III discourse board members need to "frame decisions and choices, not make them" (p. 120), which takes a willingness to relax the usual formal rules of board discussion (p. 121). Their advice is for trustees to promote robust dialogue and avoid "group think" (p. 125). Highly participative techniques suggested to generate "robust discussions" included setting aside time for board members to write questions the board should consider on note cards, breakout sessions, surveys, and role plays (p. 129). Also suggested was a new approach to trustee recruitment that stresses among other criteria, "a

fondness for robust discourse” (p. 178). This book made a very good case for board members to be more purposeful and to assume the leadership role organizations need them to take. Not addressed, however, was how to improve board member interpersonal communication to increase board effectiveness.

Basing a nonprofit board on human relations. Block (2007) also talked about moving away from the traditional board governance model. His answer was to create a new model based on human relations. Using his idea of conjoint directorship (p. 4) along with Altman and Taylor’s 1973 Social Penetration Theory (p. 17), Dindia and Canary’s 1993 Interdependence Theory (p. 18), and Petronio’s 2002 Theory of Communication Privacy Management (p. 15), Block took the position that board interaction should not be as structured as Chait, Ryan and Taylor suggested (p. 10). He recommended providing even more freedom to board members to promote discussion. As it has to do with communication theory, he positioned analysis of content, gauge of levels of participation and the like as issues for the nonprofit director (p. 21). While the director should be involved with these issues, board members themselves have a major role to play to improve their interpersonal and group communication.

Interpersonal Communication Theories

Pearce (1994) said that “like walking or breathing, interpersonal communication is so normal that you only think about it when something goes wrong” (p. 4). He suggested that the interpersonal communication perspective is distinctive because it includes a first-person perspective, focuses on actions rather than on objects, and provides new tools for making good judgments in real conversation situations (p. 9-10). Interpersonal communication is not a message moving from a source to a receiver as once believed (Shannon-Weaver model, 1949). Rather communicators are in interaction with other people where purpose emerges. A

conversation is a fluid and systemic act; it is the means by which the events and objects of our social worlds are created (p. 22). Pearce explained that “This social constructionist perspective of communication requires us to think in terms of interactive patterns, not atomistic units” (p. 23). From a researcher’s point of view considering a conversation from a third-person perspective, Pearce defined a conversation as “a game-like pattern of social interaction comprised of a sequence of acts, each of which evokes and responds to the acts of other persons” (p. 31). Pearce strongly suggested that researchers focus on actions rather than the entities that act and are acted on. He took the position that moral obligation; ethics and responsibility are central to interpersonal communication (p. 40).

Rhetorical-responsive social construction approach. Shotter (1997) argued that research of interpersonal communication in social constructionism should focus on the “brief interactive moments between people, in which speakers and listeners must continually react to each other spontaneously and practically, with an active, responsive understanding” (§ 3). He felt that this aspect of communication had not received the attention it deserved. He believed that the ‘background’ activity of responding to each other was foundational to all that people do (1993, p. 6). He recommended the basic method of study be “from within our conversationally sustained activities themselves, we can (through our talk in practice) draw each other's attention to certain of their crucially important features that might otherwise escape our notice, even when a vision of them as a whole, in theory, is denied us” (1997, § 5). Shotter’s rhetorical- responsive version of social constructionism was directed toward an understanding of how people make and remake that common sense 'background' in relational encounters and remake themselves in the process (§ 6). Shotter claimed that people understand each other only occasionally unless they test and

check each other's talk. He believed in practice that shared understandings are socially constructed over a period of time in ongoing conversations (¶ 6).

CMM and story telling. Pearce and Pearce (2004) described facilitated dialogue about rapidly changing demographics with Cupertino, California, community members in 1996 (p. 49). They trained 70 high school students to interview adults about positive experiences they had with diversity. During the meeting, 16 students talked about the interviews. Residents also were given the opportunity to share their stories. At the end of the meeting participants were invited to speak to the whole group with an open-microphone format (p. 49). Their techniques were based on the CMM assumptions that meanings take the form of stories and that storytellers attempt to make their world coherent through the stories they tell (p. 47). This assumption was supported by Ryfe (2006). From his work with five National Issues Forums conducted between February 1999 and January 2001, he concluded that when deliberating, participants in small group forums have a preference for telling stories (p. 73).

Bruss, Morris, Dannison and Orbe (2005) used CMM to frame the findings of a study focused on family messages related to child feeding (p. 157). Focus groups were conducted with mothers, fathers, and grandparents of children six to 10 years old in Saipan, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a stable multicultural community with relatively distinct cultural subgroups and high rates of obesity within the subgroups. The authors determined that what constitutes acceptable eating habits was co-created through shared stories along the six levels of understanding articulated by Pearce & Cronen (1980, p. 159).

Montgomery (2004) conducted a qualitative study to reach a better understanding of earlier findings about the effects on Middle Eastern children when they learned that their parents had been tortured (p. 349). Montgomery conducted in depth interviews with 14 individuals from

three families who had been granted asylum in Denmark. One important finding was the difference in “stories lived,” incidents, situations, or interactions that are describable and can be observed, and “stories told,” the stories that are developed from the meaning given to various incidents and experiences (p. 367). In Montgomery’s study, each of the families had a different story and method for telling the story to their children. The children in all three families knew the stories whether they had been told or not. How well they handled this information seemed to reflect whether they had been a part of a direct interpersonal conversation. Children had best adapted to their new lives when the parents had helped the children “attach stories told to stories lived to organize the experiences in a hierarchy of meanings” (p. 367).

Studies also show that people generally don’t just tell one story. People tell multiple stories about what is happening in any moment of communication. One story may deal with the relationship of the communicators; the next may cover the person’s concept of self; and the next the episode that the communicators are performing. Other stories may deal with situational contexts. Pearce, Cronen and Conklin (1979) extended the idea of Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) that communication involves two levels, “such that relationship is the context for and functions as a metacommunication about content” (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 48). The idea of contextualization explained how saying the same thing can mean different things “depending on the context, and that what is said as content sometimes functions just as a carrier for doing something at the relationship level” (p. 48).

The CMM idea that the substance and the pattern of reciprocal contextualization are mutable explained why people were able to change their stories. Participants moved from expressing their position and refuting the position of perceived opponents to stories that reflect the idea that others have legitimate goals of their own. This ability to move the dialogue from a

position of competition to one of collaboration is very important for small groups of people who wish to work together such as nonprofit boards.

Small Group Communication Theories

In small group literature, a small group is described as having from three to as many as 30 members, but many put the maximum at 12 to 15 members. Fujishin (2007) described a small group as “three or more people who share a common task, interact face-to-face and influence one another” (p. 3). In comparing small groups to large groups, Bales (1953) claimed that “the former differ from the latter in that each participant in a small group can remember each other participant’s presence” (Small-group, 2009, ¶ 4). Bales conducted the first content analysis research of small group communication and published the results in a series of books and articles in the early and mid 1950s (¶ 9). From those studies he developed “a method of discussion analysis that distinguished 12 types of verbal behavior” (Griffin, 2006, p. 246). Bales’ systems approach to group decision making suggested that “decision making groups face problems posed by task requirements, social-emotional needs, and environmental factors, and he regarded the process of communication as the chief method by which groups satisfy these requirements” (p. 247). Kerr and Tindale (2004) in a review of group performance and decision making research since 1990 concluded that studies tended to focus on “linear, antecedent-consequence type relations with manipulations of independent variables (e.g., group size, task type) causing changes in dependent variables (e.g., group choice, implicit decision scheme)” that disregarded how complex groups really are (p. 642).

Social construction models of group decision making. Poole and Baldwin (1996) described small group decision making as a “complicated phenomenon” (p. 229) in their chapter describing the phase, critical event, cyclical and social construction models of group decision

making. Where the first three models focused on “overt, observable decision-making activities,” the social construction models demonstrated “how decision paths are constituted by the group” (p. 229). Poole (1985) took the position in an earlier publication that the activity and interaction of members must be considered since talking to one another is the means by which group activity is carried out (Poole & Baldwin, 1996, p. 225). He felt that in addition to structure, contingency factors and phases, an adequate theory should account for how a decision is constituted in and through interaction.

Functional communication perspective. Functionalism is concerned with achieving goals as well as with patterns, rituals, and routines. It has an emphasis on “systemness” and a concern for consequences (Graham, Papa & McPherson, 1997, p. 269). The functional approach focuses on “individual acts that influence the task and social dimensions of the group” (Fujishin, 2007, p. 133). Hirokawa and Gouran saw four “requisite functions” that groups needed to fulfill to reach high-quality decisions. These four functions were problem analysis, goal setting, identification of alternatives, and evaluation of positive and negative consequences (Griffin, 2006, p. 250). Communication in Hirokawa’s functional perspective is regarded as a “tool or instrument that group members use to create the social reality in which decisions are made” (p. 255). Hirokawa and Gouran categorized three types of communication interaction in decision-making groups: promotive, focused on one of the four functions; disruptive, diverting the group’s ability to achieve the four functions; or counteractive, getting the group back on track. The functional perspective is helpful in that it promotes rational inquiry as advocated by American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (p. 258). The functional perspective suggests that while board members are constructing reality, they can do it best by raising questions, calling for more alternatives, and urging a thorough evaluation of evidence.

Organizational Communication Theories

Numerous definitions exist for organizational communication. For example, one could focus on where organizational communication takes place. “Organizational communication occurs within a particular social system composed of interdependent groups attempting to achieve commonly recognized goals” (UK, 2001, ¶ 1). Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1982) chose a broad definition: “an organization is the interlocked actions of a collectivity” (p. 122). It is this definition that described a nonprofit board as an organization.

By this definition, IBM would be an organization, but so would a regular Friday night poker group, the Jones family, or even a crowd of people who get on an elevator together. What we mean to imply is, that at this stage of thinking about organizations, we ought not be restrictive in our presuppositions about the beasts. Organizations can be large, or organizations can be small. Organizations can be long-lived, or organizations can be short-lived. Organizations can be concerned with outputs, or they need not be concerned with outputs. Although this definition may seem absurdly inclusive to some (those who already "know" that organizations are systems, or are rational, or strive to maximize profits), it is well-suited for those who wish to take seriously the idea that organizations are accomplished communicatively (p. 122).

Pacanowsky and Trujillo also distinguished between “traditional” and “cultural” organizational communication from a research perspective. Traditional organizational communication research was described as “invoking such adjectives as ‘objective,’ ‘controlled,’ and ‘detached’ to describe its methods” (p. 118). They suggested that research of this type was conducted with a “managerial orientation” for managers to come to an understanding “of how to make organizations work better” (p. 118). In keeping with the social constructionist view of this

paper and Pacanowsky and Trujillo's emphasis on a cultural approach, other theories considered are Bormann's symbolic convergence theory and Deetz' critical approach. All three provide ideas about nonprofit board communication.

Symbolic convergence theory of communication. Bormann (1982) described symbolic convergence as a general theory that “provides a universal explanation of human communication” (p. 51). It was called symbolic because it dealt with the human penchant for naming and giving things meaning. Convergence referred to the way people come together around an idea. Bormann said, “Symbolic convergence also explains how people come to have an emotional investment and commitment to the symbols they live by—how it is that people can sympathize, empathize, and identify with one another” (p. 51). Symbolic convergence theory (SCT) submits that the basic communicative process by which people experience symbolic convergence is through sharing group fantasies (p. 51). Bormann described a “fantasy” as “a technical term explaining the way people create their social reality” (p. 52).

One application Bormann described was using the theory to improve two-way, family and small group communication when problems are present. Bormann felt that SCT also could help during a communication audit by examining if members of an organization shared common stories about what it means to be a part of that organization (p. 56). Bormann called SCT's use with mass media effects its “most striking applications to this point” (p. 57). However, Cragan and Shields (1999) in their study of practical uses for communication theory determined the clearest value of SCT was to “capture the symbolic realities of large groups of people” in such situations as recruiting, segmenting markets and lessening cultural misunderstandings (p. 102).

Critical theory of communication approach to organizations. Deetz examined communication practices that undermined fully representative decision making in organizations.

He believed the lack of representation reduced the quality, innovation and fairness of company policy (Griffin, 2006, p. 302). Deetz (2009) explained that he tries to figure out how to include diverse interests. He does not tend to complain about the injustice of exclusion. “I suspect that everyone coming to critical theory has some degree of anger at social injustice and some love of the potential in human sociality. I lean to the later” (¶14). He said critical theory is expressed based on personal background and experiences. The differences people bring to the larger discussion are both limiting based on social history and helpful in enabling a fuller discussion (¶ 13).

What differentiates Deetz’ theory from CMM is his belief that the issue of power runs through all language and communication. An important message for people responsible for communication—whether part of a corporation or another type of organization—comes from *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*. “Communication is distorted whenever genuine conversation is precluded, or more specifically, any of the conditions of the ideal speech situation are not upheld” (Deetz 1992, p. 173). Deetz believed that all communication is distorted to some degree, but many are overcome in the “to-and-fro character of interaction” (p. 173). Some distortions are systematic, however, and can result in many different types of discursive closure where potential conflict is suppressed (p. 187). What Deetz described as one of the most common types seems particular relevant to nonprofit board discussions. He called it disqualification. “Disqualification can occur through the denial of the right of expression, denying access to speaking forums, the assertion of the need for certain expertise in order to speak, or through rendering the other unable to speak adequately, including through processes of deskilling” (p. 187).

The organizational culture approach. Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1982) believed that organizations are “places where people work and do a whole lot of other things, and all of these

work things and other things constitute life in that organization” (p. 117). They did not have a managerial orientation. They described the motive of the organizational culture approach as understanding “how organizational life is accomplished communicatively,” with a special interest in “workways, folk tales, and ritual practices of an organization” (p. 122). They suggested the value of an organizational culture study is that it can serve as necessary, pre-quantitative description for those researchers interested in devising quantitative (p. 128). It also could provide any member (manager, worker, volunteer) with an overall picture of the organization (p. 129). Organizational culture studies were believed by Pacanowsky and Trujillo to reaffirm the centrality of communicative behaviors in organizational inquiry. Despite organizational theorists saying that communication is the central process in organizations, research often failed to look at communication itself, looking instead at communication activities. “One strength of the organizational culture position is its invitation—or more accurately, its directive—to observe, record, and make sense of the communicative behavior of organizational members” (p. 129).

Critical Evaluation

The information provided above informs nonprofit board member communication. Although the nonprofit board literature did not provide any specific recommendations for assessing or improving discourse between board members, Chait et al., and Block supported the idea that new approaches for board member communication are needed. Deetz (2003) spoke to this need as well in his Becker Lecture on the University of Iowa campus.

Democratic communication, talking to reach mutual decisions, is one of the most complex, sophisticated skills that human beings have ever developed. The ability to reach decisions with other people who are different from us is extraordinarily difficult and

requires very special and currently very rare skills. It is one of the most acculturated aspects of being a human being. And yet we often believe that if we simply give them a space people naturally have the skills (p. 11)

Social constructionist research, and specifically CMM theory, provides a framework for assessing board communication. The ideas that people build meaning through their interaction and that interaction stems from and leads to human action are basic to how board members talk with one another. The CMM communication perspective suggests that being more mindful of how and when board members talk to one another will improve relationships. The “communication perspective” component of CMM suggests that the language used is important and has consequences. Nonprofit board members who believe this component of CMM theory will be more likely to be mindful of what they say and how they say it during the discourse and work of the board during meetings.

One of the most important ideas that surfaced in the literature was that telling stories is paramount to creating shared meanings. Stories were found to be foundational to building coherence, performing in organizations, and creating shared fantasies. Support was found for the idea that board meetings are performances where members can construct what they wish to construct through their dialogue and interaction. In addition, research found differences in “stories told” and “stories lived” and techniques were suggested to detect and compare these two ways of knowing. Research also suggested that providing context and working with CMM’s six levels of understanding would help to connect stories to current experiences to build shared understanding. What stories do board members tell? Do they see telling stories as having a place in board discussions? One study found that when a group works with a facilitator, the members of the group can be encouraged to tell their stories more fully and from different perspectives.

With the cultural approach, the idea of telling stories was broadened to suggest that people take on roles and actually perform to reflect the ways that other organizational members act. These organizational performances were described as interactional, contextual and episodic. Other studies demonstrated that interaction can be improved when participants consider the context in which the communication takes place. The focus on context brings to light an important consideration for a new nonprofit board. It would suggest that attention to building context is an important endeavor for board members who are just getting to know one another and the work of the organization.

The functional perspective literature provided ideas about the role communication and CMM play when paired with the four functions for decision making. Where communication was seen as a tool, CMM was seen as a by-product of using the tool. In this scenario, the four functions were the behaviors board members needed to act out in order to make high-quality decisions. Promoting rational inquiry was seen as increasing decision making quality as well. Techniques suggested were raising questions, calling for more alternatives and urging a thorough evaluation of evidence.

Pacanowsky recommended that organizational communication be studied by observing, recording and making sense of communicative behavior of group members. Pearce and Pearce and other CMM theorists also insisted that to understand discourse one had to look at people in conversation—what they say, how they say it and how one response builds on the next and so forth. It seems to follow that to study how a group of new board members work together to accomplish the organization's goals, one must look carefully at how they talk together.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Based on the findings in the literature review, the following questions emerge as appropriate in a communication audit that uses social constructionism as a theoretical background and CMM as a model:

RQ1: How do board members describe their current discussions during board meetings?

RQ2: Do board members connect board and organizational performance with board member discussions that take place in the board meeting setting?

RQ3: What are some of the factors that limit effective discourse among board members and if so how might these factors be overcome?

RQ4: Does the process of assessing interpersonal communication increase individual board member awareness and understanding of their responsibility to produce successful discussions at board meetings?

RQ5: How might improved board member interpersonal dialogue affect the organization's communication to other stakeholders?

As a result of the communication audit, along with the survey, interviews, and meeting evaluation that will be a part of the audit process, the study is expected to find that the information board members receive about interpersonal, small group and organizational communication during the study will improve the effectiveness of board meetings and as a result improve board decisions as well.

Chapter III: Scope and Methodology

Communication audits have been a key means of charting a for-profit organization's communicative functioning since the early '50s. Since the mid-90s, audits also have been recommended for nonprofits (Hargie, Tourish & Wilson, 2002, p. 414). A communication audit is an in depth organizational study based on ethnographic research methods. An audit would also be considered ethnographic in nature if the researcher "lives" with those being studied (Griffin, 2006, p. 424). Conducting a communication audit can help management identify information needs of the organization and its publics; understand how its cultural climate and structure fit with those needs, goals and philosophy of the company; expose information bottlenecks; and know what parts of the system need to be in a direct line relationship with the communication operations base (Badaracco, 1988, p. 28). Looking first at board member interpersonal communication and then considering how discussions ultimately affect the organizational communication should result in helpful findings for a nonprofit organization's board members.

Scope of the Study

The assessment of interpersonal, small group and organizational communication was focused on a ten-month-old, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization called the Northern Kentucky Forum (Forum). The study was designed as a comprehensive analysis of the entire organization. The Forum's mission is to encourage fellow citizens in its three-county area to be informed and actively participate in public policy issue discussions. The mission is implemented through staging seven to 10 variously formatted public meetings a year where local issues are discussed. Providing audience interaction is emphasized. Although the Forum has had four successful events since October 2008, members are struggling with governance issues, fund-raising, and other concerns of infant organizations. With group norms not yet defined, board members seem

to be uncomfortable discussing difficult issues. Permission to study the group was obtained from the group via a communication from the chairman to the members and their written approval back to him. Written approval was provided for the study on Feb. 9, 2009.

Methodology of the Study

Downs and Adrian (2004) submit that successful implementation of most audits depends on nine crucial planning steps. These include: (1) finances, (2) expectations about final report, (3) nature of auditor-client relationships, (4) liaison format with the organization, (5) identification of major focal areas, (6) appropriateness of audit techniques, (7) selection of respondents, (8) time sequence, (9) publicity about the audit, and (10) documentation of audit arrangements (p. 22). Each of these areas will be addressed separately.

Finances

Forum audit expenses will be paid by the auditor. It is a small organization and expenses should be minimal. Telephone calls will be local. Postage costs can be avoided by sharing materials and information via email or face-to-face. The researcher will handle administrative duties. Travel expenses will be tracked, but absorbed, as will charges for supplies. When the audit is completed, the total cost will be calculated so that the organization can post the amount as an in-kind contribution.

Expectations about Final Report

Board members expect to receive recommendations about how to improve board communication. All board members will be given a copy of the final thesis document.

Nature of Auditor-Client Relationships

Of the three models Downs and Adrian describe, this audit would most closely resemble a “medical model.” The authors describe it in this way: “A medical model occurs when the client

organization (the patient) describes the symptoms and asks the auditors (the doctor) to diagnose the problem” (p. 24). As a member of the board, the auditor acted as both patient and doctor; describing the symptoms and suggesting that an audit would be helpful to diagnose the problem. The other two models are a “purchase model” where the organization diagnoses a problem and hires the auditors to solve it (p. 23) and a “process model” where auditors act as resource advisors to clients and work jointly with them in all respects of the audit (p. 24).

Liaison Format with the Organization.

An auditor must be clear about who works with whom. In this case, the auditor will work directly with all members of the board, but keep the chairperson apprised of each step of the process.

Identification of Major Focal Areas

Downs and Adrian suggest focus areas that “(1) cover a broad range of communication processes and (2) relate at least some of those communication processes to other organizational variables in some depth” (p. 50). Greenbaum and White (1976) report that organizational communication usually covered “face-to-face conversation, telephone talk, letters, reports, memoranda, exchanging ideas, communication hardware, company publications, bulletin board information, and meetings” (p. 5). They explained, however, that they also accepted a broader definition of organizational communication that included “all verbal and nonverbal stimuli affecting human behavior so that communication in organizations also includes position titles, office size, body actions, signs, and signals” (p. 6). Forum board members are volunteers, so titles and office size don’t come into play, nor do company publications and bulletin boards. Forum members do, however, bring with them a perceived community position and they engage

in face-to-face conversation, telephone talk, email, letters and reports. They also meet and exchange ideas with all the body language, signs and signals one would expect.

The study covered the Forum's internal and external communication, with internal being defined as the communication between board members and external representing all other communication. Information was collected on the organization's structure, policies, objectives, strategies and tactics as the basis for the internal communication. Also described are the reasons board members joined the board. Internal communication includes the types of information board members exchange, its adequacy and how it flows, the board members' relationships and networks, and board members preferences in communication media and technologies. Board meeting discussion was observed to collect information about the way board members talk with one another. Considered were the content of the discussions; how the content is performed, also called speech acts; what communicative rules seemed to be followed by board members; whether describable sequences of speech acts take place; and how or when board members tell stories to enhance understanding. External communication included all the ways the Forum tells its stories to other audiences from publicizing events to building the image of the Forum as a reputable organization to requesting funding and in-kind gifts from various sources.

Choose Audit Techniques

Many techniques have been proven to be reliable in auditing communications. These include observations, interviews, questionnaires, critical incidents, network analysis, content analysis, focus groups and communication diaries (Downs & Adrian, 2004, p. 25). Rubin, Rubin and Piele (2005) called studies that focus on people's actions and reactions people- or behavior-oriented research (p. 226).

This approach to communication research includes self-reports of attitudes and behaviors via survey questionnaires, observations of other peoples' behavior, and experimental research. Survey researchers seek to describe or explain people's current attitudes, opinions, thoughts, and perhaps, reports of behavior surrounding an issue or event (p. 226).

The audit techniques that were used for the Forum study were interviews with board members, asking members to self-report by completing survey questionnaires, and researcher/auditor observations. To conduct observational research the researcher/auditor observes to see how people act in different situations (p. 230). Rubin, Rubin and Piele said there are at least five forms of observational research: ethnography, participant observation, unobtrusive observation, network analysis, and verbal and nonverbal coding (p. 230).

Selection of Respondents

The Northern Kentucky Forum is led by a 17-member group. Sixteen members excluding the researcher were the subjects of the study.

Time Sequence

The pre-survey was completed between March 6 and March 11. The conversation analysis was collected at the Thursday, March 12, board meeting. The personal interviews were conducted between March 11 and March 24. The post-study survey was completed between March 24 and March 29. The completed audit report will be provided to members at the Thursday, May 14, 2009, meeting.

Publicity about the Audit

Board members were provided information about the audit through email communication. Additionally, the study was discussed at the Feb. 19, board meeting. As subjects of the study, each member received a letter explaining the study and his or her right to decline to

participate. Each person was contacted about an interview appointment. Everyone also was contacted via email with a link to participate in the online surveys. Board members will be provided a copy of the audit conclusions in May as well as an oral presentation.

Documentation of Audit Arrangements

Downs and Adrian submitted that all audits should include detailed documentation of all aspects of the study. An auditor also should consider a written contract to formalize for the client and the auditor what is expected during the process. In this study, the Forum audit has been documented through the thesis process.

Instruments, Procedures and Justification

Ethnographic approach. The primary source of data will be observation of everyday communication episodes and events. In addition, participant-observer interaction and interviews will be used to collect stories, accounts, and explanations for the events and episodes observed. A critical/historical framework will be used to develop key questions, problems, and issues to pursue through observations and interactions with fellow board members. A narrative format will describe and analyze the data (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2007, p. 365).

Interviews. Interviews were scheduled and conducted with individual board members. The researcher talked with each member about why he or she thought the work of the Forum is important; why he or she joined the board; what he or she would like to see the Forum accomplish; what past experiences are important to its work; what strengths other board members bring to the work; and when talking to others about the Forum, how he or she describes the work and mission. Research questions 1, 2 and 3 also were addressed: How are current board discussions described? How are the board's performance and board discussions connected? What

is the comfort level of expressing ideas or concerns at the meetings? What would improve the overall communication of the Forum? The interview guide appears in Appendix. G.

Surveys: The 16 board members received a link via email to a questionnaire. Each member was asked to complete both a confidential pre-study questionnaire in early March as well as a post-study questionnaire in late March. The questionnaires were used to answer RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 with the pre-survey setting the baseline and the post-survey gauging if any change occurred in awareness and understanding through the interactions of the researcher with the board members. Copies of the surveys are available in Appendix A and Appendix D.

Content analysis using CMM and cultural approach. As in a study of child obesity in one community (Bruss, et al., 2005, p.1), CMM theory provided a schemata to gain insight into how board members are building the Forum culture through their discussions. The researcher as a “participant observer” (Rubin, Rubin & Piele, p. 231) looked for the human actions of each board member when they are face-to-face in a meeting situation as well as during individual interviews. Close attention was paid to nuances of speaking, of gesturing, of touching, of not saying anything, and the like (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2007, p. 369). Also noted were actions such as when individuals arrive and depart and who is greeted and who isn’t? Other questions included: Is the meeting formal or informal? Who speaks out and who waits to be called upon? What stories do people tell? What outside organizations are talked about and how are they connected? Who talks about them? How are items brought to conclusion? How are decisions made? What communication takes place after the meeting?

The Cultural Approach was used to understand and explain the Forum’s communication from the organizational perspective. Interestingly, in the “Literature Review” Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1982) were quoted as saying “an organization is the interlocked actions of a

collectivity” (p. 122) as well as describing organizations as “places where people work and do a whole lot of other things, and all of these work things and other things constitute life in that organization” (p. 117). Of course, in 1982 it probably was true that organizations were considered to be in one place. But the first definition is more relevant to today’s virtual organizations. The Forum is mostly a virtual organization. Members are face-to-face one time a month for a board meeting and several times a year during the events. The remainder of the time the work of the organization is done from offices and homes around the community with email and telephone being a typical way to communicate. Nevertheless, a culture is forming and one that needs to be considered in relationship to how the organization sees itself and then communicates with others. In all of the methods of data collection, particular attention will be paid to observing, recording and making sense of the work ways, folk tales, and ritual practices of organizational members.

Network analysis. Greenbaum and White theorized that organizational communication was the sum of a group of communication networks with each network being related to one or more of the major organizational goals (Greenbaum & White, 1976, p. 6). They thought in terms of four major networks: the regulative, the innovative, the integrative, and the informative-instructive networks.

The Regulative or Task-Related Network relates to the organizational goal of productivity, securing conformity to plans through the effective coordination and functioning of operations. The Innovative Network relates to the organizational goal of adaptability to internal and external influences. The Integrative Network relates to the organizational goal of providing personal fulfillment and securing high morale for all

personnel. The Informative-Instructive Network relates to the achievement of all organizational goals by furnishing general information and task-related instruction (p. 6).

They produced a chart that described an organization's internal verbal communication network objectives. This type of methodology will be followed to illustrate the Forum's communication system. It is expected that recording conclusions in this way will help communication gaps be more evident and, therefore, more visible to board members. It seems that this analysis may be helpful in addressing RQ5.

Justification

According to Hargie, Tourish and Wilson (2002) "The first step in developing a coherent communication strategy is to ascertain the state of an organization's communicative health" (p. 415). A communication audit is a proven method for identifying current practices, discovering information gaps, and ascertaining the health of communication systems. Audits also can be used to explore the communication climate—trust, confidence, credibility and candor—and the way it affects how the organization functions (p. 415). To strengthen the Forum board's communication and decision making processes, a communication audit seems an appropriate plan of action. Documenting the current state of the Forum's communication health will provide a solid platform for the group to improve interpersonal, group and organizational communication and from that, to establish an organizational that can achieve its mission.

Chapter IV: The Study

Data for the communication audit was collected using three methods: surveys, interviews and participant observation. This chapter explains how the data was collected, provides the results of the data collection, describes what was discovered, and discusses what the results mean for the future of the organization.

Results of the Study

Participants and response rates

The 16 participants in the study ranged in age from 20-something to 60-something with 10 males and six females. All are college-educated. All are members of the Forum board by choice, although some do see their volunteer role as connected to their work role. Of the 16 members, 13 have attended meetings fairly consistently over the past eight months. Three, two men and one woman, have not. Eleven board members, 69 percent of total participants, completed the first survey. The second survey was completed by 12 members, or 75 percent of the participants. Nine members of the study group, plus the researcher, were in attendance at the March board meeting, a turnout of 57 percent. Fourteen of the 16 members, or 88 percent, participated in individual interviews.

The Web-Based Surveys

Sixteen board members received an email communication that contained a link to a confidential survey on Friday, March 6, which they were asked to complete before March 12. Nine people met the deadline and two others completed it before it was closed on March 24, a response rate of 69 percent. The survey was developed, collected and analyzed using Survey Monkey, an online survey administration site. On March 24, a second survey was posted on Survey Monkey. Sixteen board members were notified that day via email and provided a link to

access the questions. Within 24 hours of the communication, 10 of the 16 board members had completed the second and final survey and two others completed it before the deadline, a response rate of 75 percent. The surveys and their results are in Appendix A, page 56, through Appendix E, page 66.

First survey. The intent of the first survey was to introduce ideas about board communication by asking participants to rank statements on a seven-point Likert Scale with choices ranging from strong agreement, rated as 1, to strong disagreement, rated as 7. With this rating system, rating averages lower than “3” show agreement to the statement. Rating averages higher than “5” show disagreement to the statement and a “4” rating average shows a neutral response. The rating average for each statement appears in the last column of the table. For each statement in Tables 1 and 3 the rating chosen by the most participants is highlighted. The statements to be ranked covered the Forum’s mission and strategies, organizational structure, discussions, teamwork and personal board commitment.

Second survey. The purpose of the second survey was to determine if the 16 study participants changed how they rated specific statements after participating in the four-week communication study. Not all questions were duplicated in the second survey. A set of questions were added to the second survey that had not been addressed in the first one to gauge whether board members believed the communication audit was a positive experience. One additional participant completed the second survey than the number who completed the first survey.

Results. The first survey provided the baseline for what board members believed about the organization and its communication. With “1” being strongly agree, and “7” being strongly disagree, scores on the first survey (Table 1) ranged from 1.92 to 4.33. Those statements with the strongest agreement and their rating average included “I enjoy being a board member” (1.92); “I

have all the opportunity I need to ask questions and secure information” (2.00); and “How we share information at board meetings is important” (2.18). After closing the second survey and comparing only the statements that were in both surveys, two of the top three statements were the same. The three top statements in Table 3 were: “I have all the opportunity I need to ask questions and secure information” (1.83); “How we share information at board meetings is important” (2.08); and “What I say at board meetings is understood by all members” (2.17). The average rating for the statement “I enjoy being a board member” located in Table 3 dropped in satisfaction from an average rating of 1.92 to an average rating of 2.33.

The Participant-Observation of a Board Meeting

Dialogue at the March meeting of the Forum board was observed. With 2009 meeting dates set in December 2008, there was nothing unusual about the meeting’s date or the 8 a.m. start time. All meetings are held at Sanitation District #1’s conference room in Kenton County.

When the participant-observer arrived for the meeting, the room was set up in a large U-shape constructed of 12, three-person tables. To create an arrangement more conducive to interaction and taping the conversation, another early arriving board member helped to arrange a small square using four tables, which would accommodate up to 16 people. Ten of the board’s 17 members attended the meeting. The chairman was absent, but he had asked another member to lead the meeting in his stead. Although meetings usually last no more than an hour and a half, several board members announced they would be leaving early. The first person left at 8:30 a.m. The acting board chair was the second person to leave and he departed at 8:45 a.m. The third person left at 9 a.m. Seven members stayed until the unusually long meeting ended at 10 a.m.

Before the meeting began two tape recorders were turned on and the group was reminded that the meeting was being taped. An agenda was provided that morning. The first item was a

review of the financial status of the organization. The acting chair reviewed the treasury report, which was attached to the agenda. He asked another member about an expense. At that point the discussion veered off to details of the next event and the costs that could be involved. After some discussion, the chair suggested that the board move ahead into the next agenda item since it was a report on the details of the event being discussed. However, the member who had been discussing the upcoming event asked that instead an item be added to the agenda. He wanted it addressed immediately since some members had voiced a need to leave early.

Members agreed through informal consensus to discuss a request by a non-smoking advocacy group. They asked the Forum to partner with them on an educational program. An animated discussion followed where nine of the ten members spoke and many related the request back to the mission and then the image (brand) of the organization. Although initially there was not agreement in how to proceed, the group was able to come to a consensus about being a partner by establishing conditions that would need to be met by the other group. A motion was made that the Forum partner with the conditions established. It was so unusual for a motion and second to be considered that the acting chair almost forgot to ask for a vote. A small event committee was named to oversee the program after the vote. The agenda was followed for the remainder of the meeting.

The dialogue of the first 45 minutes of the meeting included the discussion about the proposed partnership. This segment of the meeting discussion was analyzed using Bales Interaction Process Analysis, “which categorizes communication according to its purported interpersonal goal, such as expressing social information and emotions, or inquiring about the task or procedure at hand” (Pena, 2004, p. 7). This process also has been described as a way “to identify and record the nature (not the content) of each separate act in ongoing group interaction” (Frey, 2009). A table appears in Appendix F, page 66, showing this analysis. Each row lists a speaker,

his or her speech act characterized in one of 12 descriptions of interaction: seems friendly, dramatizes, agrees, gives suggestions (neutral), gives opinion, gives information, asks for information, asks for opinions, asks for suggestions, disagrees, shows tension, or seems unfriendly. This table shows the number of speech acts by category for the 45-minute session.

| FORUM MARCH MEETING INTERACTION | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------|------------------|
| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
| 10 | SPEECH ACTS PER CATEGORY | 7 | 12 | 15 | 20 | 82 | 63 | 15 | 16 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

An analysis of the speech acts and their nature indicates that the ten people in conversation that morning were open to one another. Since the group had not dealt with this kind of issue before, the topic could have been contentious. The members, however, were able to work through their concerns, share opinions, ask questions and come to a consensus. The analysis of the discussion showed only one tense comment and very few statements of outright disagreement. If it had been a regular business discussion this finding may not have been surprising. It was, however, a difficult conversation, so the nature of the conversation was of note. The conversation was friendly with some humor and drama evident as one would expect to see with those who work well together.

Individual Interviews

Fourteen of the 16 study participants participated in private interviews with the researcher between Thursday, March 12, 2009, and Tuesday, March 24, 2009. The talks ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix G, page 81. Some

discussions took place over breakfast or lunch; others were in office settings. During his interview, Mark Neikirk talked about the founding of the Forum. He was the person who gathered people together last summer to undertake discussions about this idea. Mark said the Forum is important because it provides the “public square” that is now missing in the 350,000-person community and embraces the idea of “intergenerational leadership.” He also believed that the three sponsoring organizations were the right ones to be backing the Forum with the university’s regional role, the work Vision 2015 had already accomplished in determining what issues are important to citizens, and Legacy’s mission to provide leadership opportunities to young professionals.

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the interview results information provided in Appendix H, page 83, highlights key issues without attribution. This information is categorized by the primary questions that were asked. Each board member discussed why he or she joined the organization and shared his or her thoughts about why the work of the Forum is important. Also discussed was what he or she would like to see the Forum accomplish; what structure and abilities it will take to be successful, and how decisions should be made.

Attempt at Network Analysis from Data Gathered During Interviews

Four major network (the regulative, the innovative, the integrative, and the informative-instructive) were considered as a way to analyze the Forum’s internal communication network. The majority of Board members thought that without the organization having a clear structure, it would be impossible to characterize the current board discussions in this way. However, there was an interest in using the categories as a guide for board meeting agendas.

Assessment of Forum’s Public Face

A review of Forum specific email and internet postings tells the story of the Forum's public face—it hardly exists. A Google Search turns up little, primarily because the Forum has yet to create a web site. All results from the search are sites that have posted information about Forum events. Northern Kentucky University (NKU) has been supportive, which is positive, but may also be confusing for the Forum's brand. When Forum events take place on NKU's campus, announcements about those events make it difficult to distinguish the Forum from NKU.

The Forum's first public introduction was during a Legacy event in a Covington, Ky., hotel ballroom on September 2008. The chairman of the Forum's Board took the stage for less than five minutes during the luncheon to report that Legacy had agreed to be one of the three sponsoring organizations for this new effort. Since then, members of Legacy have received announcements about Forum events through email and reminders on their web site, which is provided to them by the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

With an understanding that an audience would need to be built, a Forum logo was developed in September 2008. A fact sheet, fund raising letter and contact forum also were created. About 20 letters have been mailed with a 4 percent return rate. Forum board members were asked to furnish names for the effort, with limited success. The Forum's four specific events included: 1) "Creation Science: Is it Science or Religion?" a mock trial in October on NKU's campus with 200 people in attendance; 2) "What's Ahead for the Next President?" an AP speaker and panel in November on NKU's campus with 80 people in attendance; 3) "Should you Trust the Media?" using video clips, a TV news person and panel in January (during a three-day snow event) at the Boone County Public Library with 40 people in attendance; and 4) "An Evening with the Governor" with Kentucky Governor Beshear in March at NKU's campus with 300 people in attendance. Each event was promoted through posters, news releases, emails

targeted to people on specific lists, and occasional talked about in local cable channel interviews. Partnering organizations or speakers, if involved, also have used their circles of influence to promote events. Several pieces of material that have been generated are available in the appendix, beginning on page 100.

Discussion

The Northern Kentucky Forum communication audit found evidence of committed volunteers who passionately believe that citizens need a way to discuss important community issues. There was clear evidence of a desire to be community-centered. Board members are presently in the early stages of learning to work together. A positive finding was the high regard expressed for the people who have gathered together to pursue this idea. During the interviews, this respect was evident in how people talked about the abilities and experiences of other members. Current members were appreciated, Also expressed, however, was a belief that more diversity of race and culture were needed to appropriately reflect the entire community.

The organization's communication is not unhealthy, but it also is not as strong as it will need to be to articulate a mission and goals to which all members can relate. Meaning is being produced through the words and symbols people use during interaction, but the process has not worked as fast as some people expect and prefer. If this process is not accelerated, it is possible that the organization will lose some of the people, ideas and energy that can make it a strong, productive force in the community.

Considering CMM and the Communication Perspective

CMM theory tells us that form is demonstrated in the communication perspective with such questions as “Who is included in the conversation and who is not?” and “How would decisions be different if everyone's voice was heard?” It also suggests that how a person

responds affects discussion as does who responds, their tone of voice and the like. The survey results, the interview responses, and the dialogue analysis all indicate that this is a group of people with high regard for one another. The difficult discussion at the board meeting had little tension and a great deal of attention to hearing all views. The meeting discussion (Appendix F, page 66) illustrates a group of people who are open to hearing every voice and providing each voice the respect it deserves. The researcher did not observe any distortion of the type Deetz called “disqualification,” where people are denied the right of expression, access to speaking forums or the assertion of the need for certain expertise in order to speak.

Considering CMM and Coordination

The term “coordination” is used in CMM to recognize how humans in conversation work to align action as they converse. In both the meeting discourse and during interviews, the participant-observer noted that established patterns of response are not yet set with this new and generational diverse group. When people talked they seemed to do so in a measured, almost careful manner. When questioned during the interviews about getting to know fellow members of the group and how to talk together, people seemed to think that this new group is different from others previously encountered.

Interviewees were introduced to the theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning. CMM theory was explained as a way of thinking about how board members create reality through their discussions and stories during meetings. Most members expressed interest in this idea, with several asking for additional reading materials on the subject. The object of these exchanges was to provide members a new way of thinking about discussions. Although the study will be complete before the next board meeting, seeing continuing mindfulness to how and when

board members talk would help validate the hypothesis that providing information about communication during the study will improve the effectiveness of board meetings.

One indication of this mindfulness has already taken place. The second survey results show higher levels of agreement to the statements about the importance of discussions. Two statements that obtained the highest rating averages are also found in the table (Appendix E, page 65). Eleven of the 12 respondents agreed that the study will improve board member discussion as well as communication to external audiences. Six of the 12 respondents strongly agreed with these two statements. These two statements had a rating average of 1.75, the highest rating for any statements on either of the two surveys. This positive rating could be based on a high level of awareness about the role communication plays or could be a reflection of the appreciation board members felt for the work that has gone into assessing Forum communications. In either regard, it bodes well for the Forum's future desire to improve communication.

Considering CMM, Coherence and Mystery

One of the central ideas of CMM is that telling stories is imperative to building context and creating shared meanings within groups. Coherence is about context and making meaning; mystery connotes acting like a native. The average rating for the first survey statement "I tell stories to help others understand my points of view" was 3.25, with half of the respondents rating this question "neutral" (Appendix B, p. In the follow-up survey, the rating average for this statement increased to 2.25 with only one respondent marking this statement as "neutral." Although the researcher did not hear an abundant use of stories in the board meeting setting, stories were very evident in the personal interviews. Those members most noted for their position in the community seemed to be the ones most likely to tell stories to get their points across. Are some people successful because they tell stories or did the practice of telling stories

result from the many and varied experiences people had? In any case, it seems that people appreciate stories to provide context.

The most glaring discovery during the interviews was that board members were not aligned on the mission and strategies. For one thing, everyone did not have the same background information. New members who have been added to the board have not had the benefit of hearing the discussions the original formers shared. The importance of building context as suggested in the cultural approach was evident in the confusion about the Forum's mission. Evidently, many of the board members had not gained the appropriate context, the history and principles, which the founding members possessed. These differences in context have made it difficult for all members to understand the mission in the same way as those who had been involved since the Forum's inception.

Considering the Cultural Approach

Pacanowsky and Trujillo suggested that members of an organization act in ways that reflect the social conventions of other members. For a new organization, this points to the importance of time spent together in board meetings. In the first survey participants seemed most concerned with the structure of the organization and the level of member involvement in the work of the Forum. The number of neutral responses suggested either a lack of information about the survey statements or member hesitancy in speaking one's mind about these issues. Participants noted satisfaction with communication between board members, but communication at board meetings seemed more problematic. These responses suggest a high level of satisfaction with personal involvement, but more clarity seems to be needed about participants' roles in the organization.

During the interview process, board members expressed positive feelings about the March board meeting discussion as well as the fact that the discussion culminated in a shared decision. It was amiable with information and opinions being requested and given. More important, consensus was created through the discussion process at this meeting. Only one speech act in the 45 minute discussion showed tension. These positive feelings were reflected as well in the second survey's higher rating averages on such statements as "How we share information at board meetings is important." The average agreement with this statement moved from 2.18 in the first survey (Appendix B, p. 60) to 2.08 in the second survey (Appendix E, p. 65). With the statement "What we each say at board meetings is important, the average rating moved from 2.27 to 2.45. With the statement "Discussions during board meetings lead to good decisions," the average rating moved from 2.92 to 2.42. Although these are not huge differences, it is a reflection that one, two or three people moved from disagreeing or neutral positions into positions of agreement at one of the three agreement levels within a month.

Without established norms in place for this organization, it seems legitimate to wonder about the factors that allowed a positive, productive meeting. Since 10 members had responded to the first survey by March 11, it is reasonable to expect that the majority of members in attendance at the March 12 board meeting had taken the first communication audit survey. The fact that a tape recorder was running also may have played a role. It also is possible then that being more aware of communication issues played a part in the fact that the discussion was one of the best the participant-observer had ever seen with this group of people. References to the mission and how the proposal being discussed aligned with the mission were newly observed. All members who attended took part in the discussion rather than allowing a few people to discuss the issue and make the decisions.

Considering the Functional Communication Perspective

The Forum's lack of organizational structure seems to be detrimental to communication, efficiency, effectiveness and long-term board member commitment. It also seems to be the primary limiting factor for effective discourse among board members. The researcher heard that members want more structure for the organization and more structure and involvement for the process of choosing issues to consider. Currently, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the three sponsoring entities has not been signed. There are no bylaws. Bylaws, however, cannot be written until the MOA process is complete. Without bylaws there are no officer designations or descriptions, no procedures and no checklists. The only standards in the Forum's operations are the logo and a card to use for audience questions during events. Robert's Rules of Order or any other method of controlling the flow of discussion are not followed at the meeting. Members are not usually asked if there are items that should be placed on meeting agendas. Agendas are not provided until the meetings begin. Votes have rarely been taken and minutes are not always provided. Board communication is inconsistent, both in content and distribution. Everything has been handled in a very informal way. Until organization changes are considered, it will be difficult for board members to know exactly what is expected of them.

One clear preference that was demonstrated in the first survey was that board members prefer sending and receiving information via email over all other methods, including board meetings. Further probing during interviews, however, brought out several admissions that email communication was not always read completely or thoroughly. One member expressed disappointment in the lack of responsiveness to email information requests. A desire for more face-to-face communication, however, should also be noted.

Limitations of the Study

A communication audit is a subjective piece of work that relies on the author's interpretations of what she observes and participants' comments to draw conclusions. The three-pronged approach of this study—including questionnaires, observation and interviews—was an attempt to present as broad a range of inputs as possible. It also should be noted that the audit looks at the communication of this organization at a particular point in time. Any changes in the organization, or the fact that the audit took place, can and will change the organization's ability to communicate.

Chapter V: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

The Forum has an opportunity to play an important role in the Northern Kentucky community. That opinion was articulated by the majority of members. To that end, members have expressed interest in volunteering a block of time to discuss these important organizational issues in a retreat-like setting. Discussion items that should be considered are bylaws; expectations for agenda setting; timing for board communication such as how many days before a meeting the agenda will be received; criteria for successful forums; committee structure for completing work assignments; checklists to streamline event planning; and, of course, a restatement of the mission, vision and values with all member input. This list is by no means exhaustive. Many issues should be addressed in a manner where all members share in the work of the organization. The list, however, may be a good place to begin. The group also should consider retaining the services of a facilitator for this work session. A facilitator would help provide the structure in their discussion for which they have expressed an interest. A facilitated discussion would most likely provide the best results in the shortest amount of time.

In addition, members have expressed an interest in more clarity around the words used by their counterparts: What is a “forum?” What does that term mean to individual members? How will “forum” be defined by the group? Does a Forum “event” have to take place in a face-to-face setting? What is the interest and ability to build a Forum following online? What is “dialogue?” How much dialogue is expected to be evident in a successful forum? How will the group define success? Will success be judged by number of participants, amount of participation from the audience, or some other factor? Clarifying terms and expectations within the organization should

result in better internal communication and clearer external messages, and should strengthen the board's ability to offer dialogue opportunities to the greater community.

Conclusion

Through the use of a communication audit and considering CMM theory, the aim of this study was to demonstrate that the very act of studying a group's communication could improve that communication. The study also expected to show that people leading volunteer community organizations struggle more because they do not engage in dialogue about important issues rather than because they don't know how to perform their jobs. After 14 interviews, two surveys and one dialogue analysis, the conclusion is that this particular group of people had not engaged in dialogue about what their jobs should be. The expectation is that once roles are decided, the participants do have the expertise to perform those roles, which would provide credence to the study hypothesis. Through the input of the participants, information that can guide the Forum's future organizational communication is now available, which was the other deliverable expected from the study.

The process of the communication audit allowed board members to express their concerns and frustrations in a manner that preserved the good relations between members. The audit was not confrontational and the information can be presented in a manner devoid of personality or innuendo. For nonprofit community organizations where social connections are sometimes paramount to the organizations fund- and friend-raising efforts, working toward improvement through the audit process can be the best avenue for preserving these necessary and valuable relationships.

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Appendix A

| 1. First Survey | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Please rate these statements about the Northern Kentucky Forum organization. | | | | | | | |
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Moderately agree | Neutral | Moderately disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| The mission and strategies of the Forum are clear. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The mission and strategies of the Forum reflect my thinking on what we should try to accomplish. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The organizational structure operates well. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The organizational structure reflects my thinking on how we should operate. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The Forum as structured today helps us plan quality meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Everyone on the board is involved in making decisions that affect the group. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I know the goals of the Forum. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Everyone on the board is involved in setting the board's goals. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Everyone on the board is expected to contribute to improving the board's performance. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I know what it takes for the Forum to be successful. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| We involve all board members in evaluating the board's performance. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Board meetings are productive. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Board communication to board members is consistently clear. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The morale of board members is high. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Comments | <input type="text"/> | | | | | | |

2. Please rate these statements about communications between Forum Steering Committee (board) members.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neutral | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Teamwork between board members is good. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Communication between board members is usually straightforward and honest. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The chairman sees to it that the board has good communication. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Each topic discussed at board meetings is given an appropriate amount of time and attention. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The right topics are discussed at board meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The time spent in board meeting discussions is appropriate. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have all the opportunity I need to ask questions and secure information. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What I say at board meetings is understood by all members. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I tell stories to help others understand my points of view. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What we each say at board meetings is important. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How we share information at board meetings is important. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Discussions during board meetings are productive. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Discussions during board meetings lead to good decisions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Comments

3. Please rate these statements about your personal board service.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neutral | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| My responsibilities as a board member are clear. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When I volunteer for a task, I know how and where to get the help needed to be successful. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My fellow board members let me know if I do particularly well on a task. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sufficient effort is made to get my opinions and ideas. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I provide my opinions openly and honestly during board meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Barriers exist that limit effective discussions during board meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My ideas are valued. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am not taken for granted in the work that I do. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy being a board member. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Comments

4. What are your preferred methods of receiving information from the board chair? (Check all that apply.)

- Email
- U.S. mail
- Telephone call
- Face-to-face at board meeting
- Other

Other (please specify)

5. What is your preferred method of communicating with fellow board members?

(Check only one.)

- Email
- U.S. mail
- Telephone call
- Face-to-face at board meetings
- Other

Other (please specify)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. I'll be calling to request an interview. In addition, you'll receive another survey request around March 31. The communication audit results will be available to board members in May.






Thanks, again. Martha






Appendix B

| Please rate these statements about the Northern Kentucky Forum organization. | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Moderately agree | Neutral | Moderately disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Rating Average |
| The mission and strategies of the Forum are clear | 9.1% (1) | 36.4% (4) | 45.5% (5) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.64 |
| The Forum's mission & strategies reflect my thinking on what we should accomplish | 27.3% (3) | 36.4% (4) | 18.2% (2) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.27 |
| The organizational structure operates well | 0.0% (0) | 20.0% (2) | 20.0% (2) | 30.0% (3) | 20.0% (2) | 10.0% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 3.80 |
| The organizational structure reflects my thinking on how we should operate. | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 27.3% (3) | 27.3% (3) | 27.3% (3) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 4.00 |
| The Forum as structured today helps us plan quality meetings. | 0.0% (0) | 36.4% (4) | 36.4% (4) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.91 |
| Everyone on the board is involved in making decisions that affect the group. | 9.1% (1) | 18.2% (2) | 27.3% (3) | 9.1% (1) | 18.2% (2) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 3.64 |
| I know the goals of the Forum | 9.1% (1) | 36.4% (4) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.00 |
| Everyone on the board is involved in setting the board's goals. | 0.0% (0) | 27.3% (3) | 36.4% (4) | 9.1% (1) | 18.2% (2) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 3.45 |
| All board members are expected to contribute to improving the board's performance. | 0.0% (0) | 63.6% (7) | 0.0% (0) | 18.2% (2) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 3.00 |
| I know what it takes for the Forum to be successful | 18.2% (2) | 27.3% (3) | 18.2% (2) | 18.2% (2) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.91 |
| We involve all board members in evaluating the board's performance | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 18.2% (2) | 36.4% (4) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 4.18 |
| Board meetings are productive | 0.0% (0) | 27.3% (3) | 36.4% (4) | 9.1% (1) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.36 |
| Board communication to board members is consistently clear. | 0.0% (0) | 30.0% (3) | 20.0% (2) | 30.0% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.50 |
| The morale of board members is high. | 0.0% (0) | 36.4% (4) | 36.4% (4) | 18.2% (2) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.00 |
| Teamwork between board members is good. | 18.2% (2) | 45.5% (5) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 2.45 |
| Communication between board members is usually straightforward and honest. | 9.1% (1) | 63.6% (7) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.36 |
| The chairman promotes good board communication. | 0.0% (0) | 36.4% (4) | 54.5% (6) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.73 |
| Each topic discussed at board meetings is given an appropriate amount of time and attention. | 0.0% (0) | 45.5% (5) | 9.1% (1) | 18.2% (2) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.27 |
| The right topics are discussed at board meetings. | 9.1% (1) | 36.4% (4) | 9.1% (1) | 27.3% (3) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.09 |
| The time spent in board meeting discussions is appropriate. | 0.0% (0) | 27.3% (3) | 36.4% (4) | 18.2% (2) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.27 |
| I have all the opportunity I need to ask questions and secure information. | 18.2% (2) | 63.6% (7) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.00 |
| What I say at board meetings is understood by all members. | 9.1% (1) | 45.5% (5) | 36.4% (4) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.45 |
| I tell stories to help others understand my points of view. | 9.1% (1) | 27.3% (3) | 9.1% (1) | 45.5% (5) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.18 |
| What we each say at board meetings is important. | 27.3% (3) | 36.4% (4) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.27 |
| How we share information at board meetings is important. | 18.2% (2) | 63.6% (7) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.18 |
| Discussions during board meetings are productive. | 9.1% (1) | 45.5% (5) | 18.2% (2) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 2.82 |
| Discussions during board meetings lead to good decisions. | 0.0% (0) | 54.5% (6) | 27.3% (3) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.73 |
| My responsibilities as a board member are | 0.0% (0) | 36.4% (4) | 36.4% (4) | 9.1% (1) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.09 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|------|
| clear | (0) | (4) | (4) | (1) | (2) | (0) | (0) | |
| When I volunteer for a task, I know how and where to get help needed to be successful. | 0.0% (0) | 63.6% (7) | 36.4% (4) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.36 |
| My fellow board members let me know if I do particularly well on a task. | 18.2% (2) | 54.5% (6) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.36 |
| Sufficient effort is made to get my opinions and ideas. | 9.1% (1) | 36.4% (4) | 45.5% (5) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.55 |
| I provide my opinions openly and honestly during board meetings. | 9.1% (1) | 63.6% (7) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.45 |
| Barriers exist that limit effective discussions during board meetings. | 0.0% (0) | 18.2% (2) | 9.1% (1) | 27.3% (3) | 27.3% (3) | 18.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 4.18 |
| My ideas are valued. | 9.1% (1) | 63.6% (7) | 27.3% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.18 |
| I am not taken for granted in the work that I do. | 9.1% (1) | 63.6% (7) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.45 |
| I enjoy being a board member. | 36.4% (4) | 45.5% (5) | 9.1% (1) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 1.91 |
| Comment 1 | I feel pretty comfortable with my general knowledge of the goals and mission ... organizational structure is still a bit fuzzy except that I know that the board is sponsored by Scripps, Legacy and V2015. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 2 | I have high hopes for the Forum and feel that it can really fill a niche, but it's just moving too slowly for my tastes. That may be as much my problem as its problem. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 3 | The goals and mission seem to be evolving. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 4 | I know the mission, but am unclear about the strategies. Participation in planning events has not been shared across board membership, with the responsibility falling to only a few board members. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 5 | I think the forum is a great outlet for civic engagement within NKY. However, I notice personal agenda influencing the direction of some decisions. I also look for a reiteration of strategies and goals of the organization. I would also like a stronger reiteration of financials and budgets of specific projects. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 6 | This is a new effort and is being created "in motion"— so there are some growing pains. Biggest challenge right now, structurally, is effective committees. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 7 | I believe that the programming so far has been good in spite of the fact that the board is still somewhat in the wilderness. The quality is a direct result of some who have taken the "bull by the horns" and produced a good product. The quality will not last unless we get template that can be successful. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 8 | From what I have observed in the two board meetings I have attended, and emails I have received, communication between board members seems clear, respectful, insightful, and pithy. I appreciate the fact that people have differing opinions and feel safe expressing them, even if others disagree with them. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 9 | We spend a great deal of time discussing the strategy and goals of the group. The project leaders for the specific projects seem to get little time to speak of project development. I would like to see a stronger committee structure to support the team leader or a more developed willingness from the board to support the project leader. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 10 | Perhaps it is because some members are not consistently there, but it sometimes seems that we revisit the same ideas every time we meet. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 11 | Having attended only two meetings, my responses are based on limited experience. Until I get a good solid footing on a committee, board, etc. I usually spend most of my time listening and absorbing information. I hope that I will make solid contributions to the board discussions in the future. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 12 | A stronger committee system is needed. Also, we need improved systems for board recruitment and approval of new board members. Lots of structure issues remain to be hammered out, not the least of which is identifying the leadership team (right now, no vice chair). Some of the issues with communication and structure are a function of the board being new. But they are important issues. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 13 | The Board is full of good well-meaning people who want to do the right thing. It is just going to take some time to get our feet on the ground. I guess we need a benevolent dictator. | | | | | | | |

Appendix C

| What are your preferred methods of receiving information from the board chair? (All that apply) | | Response Percent | Count |
|---|--|------------------|-------|
| Email |  | 100.0% | 11 |
| U.S. mail |  | 0.0% | 0 |
| Telephone call |  | 18.2% | 2 |
| Face-to-face |  | 45.5% | 5 |
| Other |  | 0.0% | 0 |
| Other | | | 0 |
| Answered question | | | 11 |
| Skipped question | | | 0 |

| What is your preferred method of communicating with board members? (Check only one.) | | Response Percent | Count |
|--|--|------------------|-------|
| Email |  | 100.0% | 11 |
| U.S. mail |  | 0.0% | 0 |
| Telephone call |  | 27.3% | 3 |
| Face-to-face |  | 54.5% | 6 |
| Other |  | 9.1% | 0 |
| Other (see comment) | | | 1 |
| Answered question | | | 11 |
| Skipped question | | | 0 |

Comment 1 Face-to-face at alternative locations.

Appendix D

| 1. Second Survey | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Please rate these statements about communications between Forum Steering Committee (board) members. | | | | | | | |
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neutral | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
| I have all the opportunity I need to ask questions and secure information. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What I say at board meetings is understood by all members. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I tell stories to help others understand my points of view. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| What we each say at board meetings is important. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How we share information at board meetings is important. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Discussions during board meetings are productive. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Discussions during board meetings lead to good decisions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Comments | | | | | | | |
| <input type="text"/> | | | | | | | |

2. Please rate these statements relating to your personal board service.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neutral | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| My responsibilities as a board member are clear. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When I volunteer for a task, I know how and where to get the help needed to be successful. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My fellow board members let me know if I do particularly well on a task. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sufficient effort is made to get my opinions and ideas. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I provide my opinions openly and honestly during board meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Barriers exist that limit effective discussions during board meetings. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My ideas are valued. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am not taken for granted in the work that I do. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy being a board member. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Comments

3. Please rate these statements about your reactions to the communication audit process

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Moderately agree | Neutral | Moderately disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Knowing the results of the communication audit will improve board member discussion at board meetings. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Knowing the results of the communication audit will improve Forum communication to external audiences. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I have a higher level of awareness today than I did before the audit process began about my role in board meeting discussions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More robust board discussions will result in higher quality board decisions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments

Appendix E

Second Survey Results

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Moderately agree | Neutral | Moderately disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Rating Average |
|--|---|------------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| I have all the opportunity I need to ask questions and secure information | 25.0% (3) | 66.7% (8) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 1.83 |
| What I say at board meetings is understood by all members. | 16.7% (2) | 58.3% (7) | 16.7% (2) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.17 |
| I tell stories to help others understand my ideas | 25.0% (3) | 33.3% (4) | 25.0% (3) | 16.7% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.33 |
| What we each say at board meetings is important. | 9.1% (1) | 45.5% (5) | 36.4% (4) | 9.1% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.45 |
| How we share information at meetings is important. | 25.0% (3) | 50.0% (6) | 16.7% (2) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.08 |
| Discussions during board meetings are productive. | 0.0% (0) | 41.7% (5) | 50.0% (6) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.67 |
| Discussions during board meetings lead to good decisions. | 8.3% (1) | 41.7% (5) | 50.0% (6) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.42 |
| My responsibilities as a board member are clear. | 8.3% (1) | 16.7% (2) | 41.7% (5) | 16.7% (2) | 16.7% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 3.17 |
| When I volunteer for a task, I know how and where to get the help needed to be successful. | 0.0% (0) | 58.3% (7) | 41.7% (5) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.42 |
| My fellow board members let me know if I do particularly well on a task. | 8.3% (1) | 66.7% (8) | 8.3% (1) | 8.3% (1) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.42 |
| Sufficient effort is made to get my opinions and ideas. | 8.3% (1) | 33.3% (4) | 25.0% (3) | 8.3% (1) | 16.7% (2) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 3.17 |
| I provide my opinions openly and honestly during board meetings. | 25.0% (3) | 41.7% (5) | 16.7% (2) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 2.42 |
| Barriers exist that limit effective discussions during board meetings. | 8.3% (1) | 25.0% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 8.3% (1) | 50.0% (6) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 3.92 |
| My ideas are valued. | 8.3% (1) | 58.3% (7) | 8.3% (1) | 8.3% (1) | 16.7% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.67 |
| I am not taken for granted in the work that I do. | 8.3% (1) | 41.7% (5) | 16.7% (2) | 25.0% (3) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.83 |
| I enjoy being a board member. | 16.7% (2) | 50.0% (6) | 16.7% (2) | 16.7% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.33 |
| Knowing results of the audit will improve board member discussion at meetings. | 50.0% (6) | 33.3% (4) | 8.3% (1) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 1.75 |
| Knowing results of the audit will improve communication to external audiences. | 50.0% (6) | 33.3% (4) | 8.3% (1) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 1.75 |
| I have a higher level of awareness today than I did before the audit process began about my role in board meeting discussions. | 16.7% (2) | 41.7% (5) | 16.7% (2) | 16.7% (2) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.58 |
| More robust discussions will result in higher quality board decisions. | 25.0% (3) | 50.0% (6) | 16.7% (2) | 8.3% (1) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 0.0% (0) | 2.08 |
| Comment 1 | Once I have more experience sharing at board meetings, I will be better able to assess if I am understood. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 2 | The conversation at board meetings is not always productive. We regress sometimes. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 3 | We are a young board and a lot has been accomplished in less than year; but more structure of the leadership and of the committee system will be required to progress and build. We especially need to collect "move-forward" ideas from all board members in advance of board meetings and present those at the board meeting. Executive committee needed to be key to this process. | | | | | | | |
| Comment 1 | The occasional dysfunction aside (and let us attribute that to growing pains), this is a wonderful, talented, dedicated board that has made something happen in our community. | | | | | | | |

Appendix F

Discussion Review Using Bales Interaction Process Analysis

Northern Kentucky Forum board meeting discussion; Thursday, March 12, 2009, 8 a.m.

to 8:45 a.m.; 10 board members in attendance.

| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
|-----|---|----------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------|------------------|
| MN | Oh, Oh, we're on the record then? | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| MJ | Yes | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JS | Oh, I have to leave at 8:30 | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MJ | If you have something to say I guess you'll have to say it quick | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| All | Laughter | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS | I will. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JS | It may not be appropriate to the agenda or anything else, but I want to get on that tape | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| All | Laughter | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Talking about the media literacy forum (taking place in a side conversation?), we have the opportunity of reprising that event. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MJ | Oh really? | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Kentucky Engagement Conference, which is an academic conference each year, will be in its 4 th year. Been hosted by UK for the past three years. Will be hosted this year by Northern at the Mets Center in November, and, uh, it is, uh a conference of, faculty, deans, provosts, and so forth who are involved in civic engagement uh. across disciplines uh, so a lot of the conversation is about issues like promotion and tenure related to civic engagement and pedagogy and stuff like that | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MJ | Oh, say it again | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | I know, what a word ... anyway | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | But, the Mets Center has clickers built into the tables. And there are breakout sessions and normally there would be four to six breakout sessions so you would have 30 to 50 people but the concept in this case would be to have probably three breakout sessions and this would be a large one and just reprise this exercise if we could get the crew back together. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JS | What exercise is that? | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| MN | Media literacy forum ... do it again at the Met Center in November. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | It would be one year after the election. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | It would be kind of interesting to see what people think of Joe the Plumber one | | | | | x | | | | | | | |

| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
|-----|--|----------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------|------------------|
| | year later. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS | And to see if ... I wonder ... It would be interesting, too, to see how all of that was leveraged in service to stimulus package and all that other kind of stuff that hasn't really been very well done yet. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JS | I'm sure Laura would be there ... | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | That's one. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JS | Crowley? I think he enjoyed himself, so | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | He'll probably do it. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JM | I think they all did | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | Rick Robinson – that will depend on book sells; since he is the John Grisham of the area ... | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | John, are you the acting chair? | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| JA | Well, I guess so. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | You guys are probably wondering who I am | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| | I apologize for the past couple of months. I studied diligently for the Kentucky Bar exam and, uh, and was in Frankfort for the General Assembly. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | But here I am today. Blair is involved in all day interview process so he can't be here. But he did send an agenda that I've placed in front of you guys. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | I will have to leave once again for Frankfort at 8:40, so I want to go over with you real quick something I attached as the second page. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| JA | You'll see that the Bank of Kentucky account for Legacy one of the partners in this collaboration currently has set up. I want you guys to see what money we have in there right now. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | When we do get a statement again uh I will provide you with a little more information about each and every debit in that account. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | I need to talk with my Treasurer about getting that information, but this is what he provided a couple of days ago. He went on line to get this. Right now we have \$1,850. After that \$i00 donation that Mark sent me the other day. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | That's where we're at in the Legacy Northern Kentucky Forum account. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | Any questions, comments? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| JM | Are we doing anything now that we need money for? I know we're working on the Governor being here | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| MN | We actually we don't have a ... we are doing things that require money. The design of the poster ... every time we do an event we pay money for the design of that ... usually \$i00, \$i25 for that, then printing costs and so forth ... | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | So far those have been absorbed by the Scripps Howard Center for Civic | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
|-----|---|----------------|------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------|------------------|
| | Engagement. Largely because my program money in the Center is designed to start programs like this and so far we haven't spent as much as I expected. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | I think I said in the beginning of this process that I would allocate \$2,000. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | That protects this account of the forum, which is the general account for the Forum. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | You know, it's like a health care plan. You pay your deductible. | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | So, we're fairly good on that. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | Right now we have a significant question from an expense standpoint ... (paused with a signal from LN) | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | I was going to talk about the Governor and parking, do you have something else? | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| LN | The postcard and postage for the Governor event will be coming up. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | About \$3,000 | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| LN | Yes, roughly \$3,000 (and then something else that was too low to capture) | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | We'll pay that ... I think we'll pay that out of the Scripps account too. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MJ | Mark, even though you're paying that some things, shouldn't we account for that as an in-kind contribution so that in the future if we are trying to raise money we can show we had that support? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MN | Yes. Yeah and we should be keeping a ledger in our office for all expenditures associated with this. Uh, with the form as a breakout. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | So every event we've designed a poster. The only exception to that has been ... Ryan Olstrander, the graphic designer who worked for the Post and is now in the graphics business, has designed all our posters except for New Media Old Values one which was done by NKU printing services and a team of sketch artists who worked for free (chuckles) | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | The other expense element on the Governor's event ... parking at ... primary parking for that will be in the Kenton Garage which is across Kenton Drive from the Student Union. You have to pay to park in that garage. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | Now if we were to have this at the Carnegie or some other location I doubt that people would complain about a parking cost. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | But I have a feeling that if we have the Governor speaking at a free forum at a public university and people find out they have to pay to park that we'll get some push back on. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | So we're seeing if there is any way to wave the parking fee and likely there will | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
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| MN | I say John, that's no where near where you're going. | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| JA | I know it | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ALL | (Laughter) | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Just keep in mind that we may have that expense, uh, and uh, I guess we should ask any objections to going with it. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Any thoughts | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MN | I guess what I'm thinking is uh it's worth it for people to have a good experience. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JS | I think, uh, especially if the arm is just up on the garage or something like that, that it would be good for people to know that we ate that cost. In other words, I hate for that thing to be open and just come in ... | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | Well, it won't just be open. Cause there are 600 spots in there and we aren't going to pay for 600 spots. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JS | So it would have to be validated so ... just wanted to make sure. | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Unless the university just says | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JS | Which in that case they can get credit for it. All I'm saying is that if we're going to make it free parking, let's make sure we get a little love; we should get credit for it. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MH | That's a good point, too. Even if it's discounted and if it's discounted and they have to pay something that they would, they would know, it's typically \$6 but they only have to pay \$2 | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MK | I would suggest talking to Andy Meek and see if there's a way | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | That's all being done | | | | | | | | | | | x | |
| MK | Just because with handicapped and such, that garage is pretty far away | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | So, everybody at peace with that? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| JA | That's all I had to say about the bank account. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | So, but it sounds like we started to get into a little bit of the Governor Beshear event and uh I guess we'll go to that next. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | If you don't mind, let's go to this "Smoking" thing. Cause some people need to leave early and this is a fairly substantive issue for us and it would be great to talk about. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | You have a quick briefing paper that I put together last night on this question. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | The Clean Air Partnership, which some of you will know about, is derivative of a program, an education program on smoking policy that's out of the School of Nursing of the University of Kentucky. They have an office in Northern Kentucky in RiverCenter. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | Is that right, Emily, do you know? | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| EB | Yes, that's right. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
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| MN | Uh, they, uh, are engaged in essentially educating the public on the risk of smoking and then what policy without recommending policies, what policy derivatives are there from that. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | Uh, we had as a Forum talked about the possibility at some point since this issue is live, of having a forum on it and when, then this would be a group that would be logical to counsel to us in such a forum. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | However, they wanted to move quickly when they came on the radar in having some town hall meeting on this. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | In informal discussions largely with ... Emily was involved some and Blair and me ... and it wasn't all that elaborate really. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | But, if they were going to have something in February, we were not well prepared to do that. We were engaged in the media literacy event. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | They had contacted the Scripps Howard Center about doing something like this. I said well, actually the reason that I'm involved in the Forum is so we can have these kinds of issue discussions under that brand name. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | But the bottom line is that we were unable to do it in that kind of time frame. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | As it turns out, they weren't able to do it in that time frame either. I told them if you want to I think this is a good topic and if you want to have essentially a teach-in on this topic then the Scripps Center would be willing to work with you on it. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | So, in the past few days they have come back and said we do want to do that. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | They have a general concept of what it would look like and we're planning to proceed with that on April, the evening of April 21 in a room in the Student Center that will hold, max out at 50 people. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | Uh. You can see in here the general idea of what the teach-in would like. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | And essentially the question is would we like to make this a Forum event—brand it a Forum event. Uh. | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MN | My feeling is that that would be for us. This is not an advocacy group it is an education group. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | Uh and they would be presenting the kind of information that should inform a policy decision like this. It is a break from some of the other things we've done. It would be intentionally smaller scale. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | Uh. The uh and, well that is essentially it. It's going to happen whether we call it a | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

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| | Forum event or not. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS | What does it mean to be, uh, to uh, what is entailed to brand it a Forum event? Is it money, is it labor, or what? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MN | Good question. And I think essentially there is no money involved other than I guess we may do some publicity of some sort on it. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | But first of all we have to be comfortable that the content of it is consistent with what the Forum is up to. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Secondly, the real labor involved; they've agreed to do the program; line up the speakers. I told them I have a lot of things happening between now and April and I can't help personally. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | The Forum isn't in a position to put together one of our ad hoc committees. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | We'll promote it, get a room for it and things like that, but you have to package the programming. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | Ok so it happens as an event of the Scripps Howard Center I'll look over the script and say yes I'm comfortable with that, can you change this a little, whatever. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | If the Forum brands it, embraces it, whatever you want to call it, then some delegation of the Forum I think it would be my recommendation gets involved in that process of looking over the program and saying yeah that good or changing that a little. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | We become advisory and if we need to for any reason we could put our foot down. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | I don't think we'll need to do that. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | You have to realize that this is a teach-in, not a debate on smoking bans. It's a teach-in on what are the issues surrounding this. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | So, we're not going to have representatives from the restaurant association and someone from the cancer society having at it over the issue. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | This is going to be health oriented people saying here are the risks of smoking, here are towns that have had smoking bans, the policy kinds of options that exist. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MN | If all goes well the audience should get an update on what's going on at the county level, what's going on at the state level, information presented. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | But to get back to your question, some delegation of the Forum would want to review the programming and say that is consistent with what we are doing. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | Then the logo would go on it and it will be a Forum event. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

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| JM | I'm sorry. Go ahead | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MK | No, you go. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| JM | Since it's going to be educational in nature and since the information is going to be put together by a group that has predetermined notions about what they are going to say and since it will come under our banner, do we need some sort of disclaimer saying the information provided within is not necessarily our stuff? | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| MK | That's what my concern is. If you look under the Partnership's mission uh "The project aims to build capacity for a smoke-free ordinance campaign in 2008-09 by diversifying the coalition which will involve the recruitment and training of popular opinion leaders from minority communities and key influential business leaders" | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MK | My only concern is if we attach ourselves with someone who is one way or another necessarily and we're attaching our name to that. That's just my hesitation. If their ultimate goal is for Northern Kentucky to be smoke-free, then ... | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JS | It becomes advocacy as opposed to convening. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MK | What is our role going to be in the community? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MH | I agree wholeheartedly with that because if you just read their agenda, they start off with questions asking how you feel about these things. Then they "teach" you something. Then they want to know if your opinion changes to their way of thinking by the end of it. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MH | I'm not saying necessarily that it's wrong—those organizations are good and they have their place. But I'm not sure that in the context of how I see this group, unless we have that other side to say here's my argument: civil liberty, freedom, whatever, uh, I think it's difficult to sponsor that kind of event. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MH | I can teach anyone anything but I'm still teaching them on my specific ideology. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JM | I don't see that it's a problem coming under our banner as long as we notify people where the information is coming from and we probably need to give the other side if they voice an expectation to have time somewhere along the way. Maybe not that night, but the opportunity to do the same thing perhaps in the opposite direction. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JS | If you look at it strictly from the confines of the branding issue, it sounds like it is off-brand because in fact the Forum is a | | | | | x | | | | | | | |

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| | convener as opposed to an advocate. If you really want to take that strict view of what conforms with the brand. But you wouldn't be the only organization to ever go a little bit off brand. So there is certainly that. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS | Reading what you just read I think is the most salient thing I've heard so far There is clearly a position here, as opposed to just sharing. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JA | Do you think that they would be willing to include other players in the discussion? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| JA | I mean not necessarily just the restaurant association or just the libertarian groups, but possibly the cancer society, the lung association, heart association, whatever? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| JA | Because I know that all those groups have differing views on what the proper policy direction is. I've dealt with all these people. These people are all or nothing—statewide ban, comprehensive ban—or nothing at all. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JA | And then you have the cancer groups and the lung association groups are a little bit more moderate and well, you know, they say we are willing to find a compromise. Our goal is this. It's a little bit different from this group's goal over here. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | Perhaps some sort of dialogue between all these different groups would help us look at what some of the health aspects are and what are some possible policy directions? | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| MN | Well, I mean I think they would be willing to do just about anything that we asked them to do. A certain amount of that then becomes a much more of a planning operation for the Forum to get all that into there. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | And I don't see this particular teach-in as a convening of a debate over what the policy should be. I think it is the set of information that you begin with to develop a policy out of this. Rather than coming to a policy conclusion. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | So all the health groups that you mentioned are likely to recommend that we do something about this that let's say is contrary to what the restaurant group would want. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | But ... see we may simply not agree on this, I would hope that we would. But I think the restaurant association would have to react to here are the smoking related deaths and health issues related to smoking in Kentucky and in this county. Uh in the same way that the Cancer Society has to react to it. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | The data set doesn't change in terms of | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

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| | how you formulate the policy just because you own a restaurant or because you run an organization that funds cancer research. The data is what smoking causes, here's how Kentucky ranks, here's how Kenton County ranks, here's how Campbell County ranks. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | You still have to formulate a policy around that set of facts. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | If we turn back time to 1859 and you said we have slavery in the country and here is how much we have and here's how it drives the economy, you would still have to formulate a policy around that set of facts, rather it is to preserve it or to take it away gradually, or have a civil war, or have an emancipation proclamation without a civil war. The set of facts doesn't change. | | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| MJ | So the question is whether the group is just going to provide facts and that's all or whether their intention is to put on the table their own policy considerations and their positions on that? | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| MN | Correct. | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MJ | And if they are, is there going to be an open time when anyone else who has a policy consideration can bring that to the table? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| LN | Under background, under this general structure. I think if we could be assured that was the structure, I think that is educational. I think we would need to have safeguards that we don't deviate into this partnership's mission. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| LN | So if we, like Mark was just saying, if it were just open and educational and we took this and then the results of the evening's program somehow informed the ultimate policy, ok, but I think we need to sign off on that final structure and the programming and give the opportunity for some open give and take and presenting of alternative views and broad base facts such as what it costs the taxpayer, if someone can come through with that information, what is a smoking ban, what has happened in other communities that have imposed smoking bans, those kind of things. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| LN | Again, if we go off and deviate from our mission that's something we need to be very careful about. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JM | It may be as simple as having some time at the end of the meeting for some sort of response to what has been presented. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| JM | If we are going to talk about Northern Kentucky Forum, the Forum means that we hear all sides as I see it. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |

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| JM | If we give them a chance to say something and they don't say anything, then all bets are off, right? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MK | I would personally like to see us do—and this is something that I've been passionate on and I apologize that I've not been able to step up because of school—but I would like to see us take focus on this issue in another event. | | | | | | | | | | x | | |
| MK | My hesitation is that with only 50 people are we really reaching out to the entire community? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| MK | This could be something that we could really make a big event and have both sides of the issue at the table rather than one side. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MK | I would just really like to see us take count on this issue and see what they found worked and what they found didn't work and then have our own. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Action now doesn't preclude action later. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | There is going to be a debate in this community around a proposed ordinance at some point. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | And even if there is not, or frankly if there is not, one of the things the Forum can do is push issues out there. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MN | But having a Forum on the facts doesn't preclude having a forum, a larger forum topic on this just as you described Melissa, at a later date. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MJ | But listen, in fact, it seems to me that this would be a great opportunity if you think we're going to have this issue later is to get as many people from the Forum Steering Committee and anybody else who might want to help with the event later on to get people grounded in the facts of the issue. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MK | I understand. | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MK | I'm just very hesitant especially because to me it is screaming advocacy and I am just worried not just about Northern Kentucky Forum, but Legacy, Vision 20i5 and all that. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MK | And uh, being connected. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MK | I'm just hesitant to attach ourselves to something. | | | | | | | | | | x | | |
| MK | We are so very new. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MK | Who are we connecting ourselves with and how is the community going to take that? | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| JM | I don't see that as a problem. | | | | | | | | | | x | | |
| | I think as long as we don't advocate for one side or the other, having the issue come up under our banner is a good thing. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JA | I will tell you that this group, the very same group, approached my fiscal court | | | | | | x | | | | | | |

| WHO | SPEECH | SEEMS FRIENDLY | DRAMATIZES | AGREES | GIVES SUGGESTIONS (NEUTRAL) | GIVES OPINION | GIVES INFORMATION | ASKS FOR INFORMATION | ASKS FOR OPINIONS | ASKS FOR SUGGESTIONS | DISAGREES | SHOWS TENSION | SEEMS UNFRIENDLY |
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| | and the other fiscal courts as well when we were having this ordinance discussion. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JA | And they asked what can we do? Can we have a forum? Would you like for us to do a forum? It never came to fruition, but it was something that even the anti-smoking people on our court thought would probably be a good idea. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JA | They supported it simply to get the issue out there, educate the community about it. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JA | I was confident when I listened to them explain what they were going to do that it was about education: here are the health effects; this is what other communities are doing. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JA | They were not saying we want a comprehensive smoking ordinance and nothing else. It was really about education and we were comfortable with that. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| MK | I'm just going with what I'm reading about their mission. | | | | | | x | | | | | | |
| JA | Yes, I see them and I know how they are. | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MK | By reading it I just worry. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MJ | I guess where I would be comfortable with is if our answer to someone who said isn't this advocacy that we would say we see it as educational and we are very willing to have another forum with everyone at the table when the time is appropriate or something like that. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MJ | That we would have an answer and not have that deer in the headlights look if someone brought it up. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MJ | That we had already agreed with where we were going. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MH | And just on the flip side of that we've spent a lot of time talking about the costs to the organization, but we haven't talked about the benefits of being involved. | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| MH | Other than getting our name out there which I think we've done a good job of so far. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JM | Well I think the benefit is that it meets the spirit of what this is all about. Trying to have a discussion about whatever is important. I think it falls within our mission pretty well. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| MH | Okay. | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| LN | And the fact that we are sitting around this table talking about whether it is appropriate aligns with that mission. Is this an issue and how do we approach and how best do we present it to the community for further action or further dialogue? | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | I don't know whether any of you have seen the University of Kentucky's | | | | | | | x | | | | | |

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| JA | Alright, alright. | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JA | I have to run now, but I will tell you that I will be more than happy to work with them. I know a lot of the players | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Jack, would you be willing to amend your motion that a delegation of the Steering Committee acts as an ad hoc committee to overview the programming. | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| JM | I have total confidence in you'all being able to work this out with them to our satisfaction. | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| JM | So yes. | | | x | | | | | | | | | |
| MJ | We have a motion. | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| JA | Call for a vote. (all Ayes) Any opposed? | | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| MN | Thank you ... | x | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MN | I know there were some difficulties here | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| | (Drowned out by laughter and discussion of Roberts Rules of Order as JA leaves for his other meeting. MH left i5 minutes later. The other seven members heard reports from event chairs for the next 45 minutes. No other issues were discussed.) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Speaking acts per category | 7 | 12 | 15 | 20 | 82 | 63 | 15 | 16 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

Appendix G

Northern Kentucky Forum Communication Audit Interview guide

NAME:

DATE:

TIME:

Questions about board member commitment

Why did you join the Forum board? Why do you think the Forum's work is important? What experiences and abilities do you bring to the board that you think are important to its work?

What abilities that are important to the work do you think other board members bring (not people, but abilities)? What abilities are lacking?

Question about the Forum as an organization

Do you think the Forum's mission, objectives, strategies and tactics are clear? (Discuss and probe.) How would you describe the mission? How do you think the organization should be structured? What would be the benefits of this kind of structure?

Questions about decision making

How would you describe the process of decision making with the Forum board? How do you feel about it being that way? What should be different?

Questions about communication flow

What kind of information do board members exchange? How would you characterize that information?

For the next questions, I will provide a chart with several rows and columns where the interviewee can write down their answers. It will use the following categories:

Regulative (What we need to accomplish)

Innovative (Problem resolution; reports)

Integrative-Maintenance (Progress review of planned events)

Informative-Instructive (How we are going to do things)

If you were to divide the board discussion into these categories, what percentage of time do you think we spend on each type? Using the same chart, can you provide an example of what we might talk about in each category? Thinking about these categories, and roles within the board, not people, who needs to receive the information? How do you know what you need to send to others? Is the information adequate for you to participate as a board member?

Questions about board meeting discussions

How would you describe current discussion during board meetings? Do you feel comfortable expressing your opinions during board meetings? Why or why not?

What would make you (or others) more comfortable?

Communication Experience

As our final topic, think of an experience with the Forum board in which communication was particularly effective or ineffective. Describe that experience in as much detail as you can. In doing so, please answer the following questions: With whom were you communicating? What happened? Why did it happen? Was it effective or ineffective? Is this experience typical of the communication with the Forum?

Conclusion

Is there anything I have left out that I should have included?

Appendix H

Board Member Interviews

Introduction

Fourteen of the 17 board members participated in private interviews with the researcher between Thursday, March 12, 2009, and Tuesday, March 24, 2009. The talks ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. Some discussions took place over breakfast or lunch; others were in office settings. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the information that follows highlights key issues without attribution categorized by the primary questions that were asked.

Why did you join the Forum board? Board members joined the Forum for a variety of reasons. Seven people specifically named Mark Neikirk as their entrée into the group. The Forum was described as an “intriguing idea” and “a worthy endeavor.” Some members mentioned the connections with NKU, Vision 2015 and Legacy as being important. Others liked the opportunity for networking or being connected. Older, more experienced members often mentioned the opportunity to mentor others through the partnership with Legacy and Vision 2015. Many members talked about the opportunity for furthering civic engagement, educating the public about community issues and “exploring issues from a lot of perspectives.”

“I looked at this forum as having a totally independent way of getting issues discussed by the community” said one person. Another said, “There are a lot of people who want to be engaged in issues, but they don’t know how to get involved in the conversation.” Another liked the idea of “people across the political spectrum talking, being civil toward one another, with good questions coming from the audience.” Joining the Forum for one member was described as fulfilling the role of “being conveners, ombudsmen, sort of the op-ed page in the community.”

How would you describe the mission of the Forum? One person said, “We aim at conversations surrounding community issues.” Another explained it as “to provide an opportunity, a venue, a format through which issues of broad interest and concern to this region can be brought forward for discussion, examination and dialogue.” Another explained, “I think our organization seeks to both uncover issues that should be discussed by the community as well as provide people an opportunity to talk about them.” A fourth member said the forum is, “a nonpartisan group that is able to bring people together to discuss issues in the community. The key is following that mission and staying true to it.”

Key words and phrases members used in describing the mission were “getting all sides of an issue addressed,” “engaging people,” “public platform,” “dialogue,” and “convener.” Also used were “community engagement” and “public education.” One member seemed to be speaking for more members than just himself when he said, “What excites me is a forum in the true sense of the word—trying to bring people into the discussion.”

One question that surfaced in several conversations was whether being a convener means only having events. Said one member: “We could do a lot virally. The act of doing that is energizing. Doing events is not all we could be.” Another said, “We’re bigger than just events. Not everyone can come to events. If there is a way to get more people involved in another way, we should find it.” One member suggested a course of action that was not event-focused. “Maybe we should build a Forum audience through social networking.” This person also suggested building a readership and listenership on Facebook and promoting programs through dialogues before an event occurs. “We don’t need a website, he said, “Just do it on Facebook.”

Some members think there is work to do to explain the mission. “Mission -wise we don’t know what we are yet, although we talk about building dialogue on basic issues. We don’t have

anything to build a following around until we understand our mission,” said one member. Said another, “We have defaulted to the obvious stuff; nothing wrong with that; but we could be so much more. It’s going to be hard to uncover the opportunities if people aren’t talking together.”

Why do you think the Forum’s work is important? A few members questioned whether the Forum’s work can be considered important if the mission and audience are not clear. One member said, “I don’t know if it’s important because I don’t know what it does yet.” This person explained that his understanding was that the chamber once served as the “town hall,” but once economic development and visioning spun off, the “community” became fragmented. “Maybe it should be a discussion among organizations rather than a discussion among people,” this member suggested. “Maybe the goal of the Forum should be to bring all these various groups together. Maybe that’s as important as having a bunch of people in the room.” This member believed the organization jumped into doing forums without having a definitive discussion to identify the audience.

Other members, however, believe there is clarity in what the Forum is trying to do. They judged the importance of the Forum on that belief. They thought the Forum is important because there is no other organization with the same mission in the region. “One of the things we’ve lost in the community is two different op-ed pages: the Post closed and the Enquirer down-sized and dropped its op-ed page,” commented one member. Another suggested that the board has available to it “a Vision 2015 perspective of what issues the community has asked us to address.”

The majority of members believed it is important for citizens to have the opportunity to discuss difficult issues and perhaps through opening lines of communication, to resolve conflicts. One member said, “We need all voices to be heard in order to make good policy decisions for the future.” Another suggested that an organization like the Forum “boosts the ability of the

community, the intelligence of the community, and the civic life of the community.” Another thought it makes the community more welcoming to people of all walks of life. Another talked about the problem of people only hearing extreme views.

How do people get good information? They get it from polar opposite sides. I mean issues like the parks proposal, the smoking ban, and so forth. There are important issues that don’t get the benefit of people in the middle. How do you come to some logical conclusion instead of some emotional reaction?

The Forum was also thought important because it provided a way for younger people to become more engaged and that events have been free. “A lot of things like this are membership based. This is for anyone, not just those in business. The opportunity is there for anyone to participate.”

Do you think the Forum’s mission, objectives, strategies and tactics are clear? The majority of respondents thought the mission was clear, but some had caveats. One board member said, “I think it is loosely clear. Our mission is not defined, but our intent is.” Another said, “Not as clear as it could be.” A third said, “I think they have been clearly stated and clearly communicated, but it is just that they are still evolving.” However, a fourth said, “I don’t know that we’ve figured out what we are yet.”

Concern was expressed about whether topics had met community needs. “I’ve been afraid that in the past several events we’ve been sticking to certain topics that haven’t been meeting our mission necessarily,” said one member. “I’ve been afraid that it was not meeting the citizen-based unit as a whole.” Said another, “I think it’s clear; I don’t know that we are necessarily meeting them. That we’re only meeting a certain percentage of the community, but not a wider base.”

What abilities, skills and experiences will it take to be successful? Board members expressed positive opinions about the abilities, skills and experiences of themselves and their fellow board members to be successful in this endeavor. “So, we haven’t really gone out and had a template of abilities we were looking for and recruited people in those areas,” said one member. According to another, “We have a great deal of leadership experience on the board—people who have led organizations in tough times.” Members listed abilities or experiences they thought important including an accountant who is attuned to the financial realities the board will continue to face; people with an interest in public policy; people from the social human services or environmental areas; creative thinkers about format; and farmers, policeman or others who would have a different perspective than current board members. Yet another described the board’s balance as good, “conservatives, liberals, republicans, democrats, experience in PR, business people, the education crowd.” Other didn’t agree. One person said the Forum needs a “broader cross-section of the community represented.”

One member said, “We need to be creative thinkers about format. We need a diversity of talent like a baseball team where somebody can catch; some can run bases and so forth. We need people who can organize an event; market an event. We need to know the community to get the right speakers; we need marketing and programming, those sorts of skill sets.” Another said, “If the board’s role is to ferret out the ideas, we need to find a way to do that.”

One opinion was that the board has “doers,” but needs “questioners.” The member said “So I think we sometimes get wrapped up in the excitement of it all, but we don’t have enough people who would say, okay, but what would this group of citizens say? So we don’t have enough questioners.” Others disagree and specifically thought the board should look for “doers.”

Said one person: “We need to think about how to involve doers. Since we don’t have staff then it is important to have people who are willing to step up and help with events.”

All agreed that diversity is important. Said one, “I think that there is a good mix on the board where there are young people and people who are more seasoned.” Another said that the board has, “intergenerational engagement—we have young folks who really are the future of the area.” To that point, a member of Legacy said, “There may be a tendency to say there are too many people from one group or another. Legacy doesn’t have to have a whole bunch of members. We encourage involvement, but we don’t need more than three or five.” To this end, one member suggested this piece of advice, “We need to cast a wider net and find the kind of people who aren’t the usual suspects.”

For the forum events it was suggested that the board needs to have strong facilitators so that people can’t take over the conversations. “In a democracy we should be constantly in conversation about the pros and cons of an issue, with civility, but not necessarily agreement,” explained one member. Another said, “The meetings I have attended have been a little bit disappointing because I haven’t seen them as drawing out input from the people who are there.” This person also described the chairman as providing input, but not engaging the members into the conversation at board meetings.

How do you think the organization should be structured? One founding member said, “The principles that we discussed early on with the founders were we wanted to be free, we wanted to bend the format, we wanted to meet frequently, we wanted to connect campus and community, and we wanted to be financially supported in a broad-based way.” Another person that had a seat at that early table was concerned that too much structure could be detrimental to “the minutemen” who had enjoyed just getting programs off the ground this past year. Another

early member described the current practice like this: “We don’t really have a structure. We have a working arrangement. We have settled into a working pattern and that works pretty well for turning out nice forums, but I don’t think that is sustainable. It’s a structural thing, or an operational thing; it’s probably both.”

Several members agreed that the structure must be grounded in the mission and would be dependent on whatever discussion and decision was made about the mission. “If the people involved believe that the mission is best served by having small group or cascading group discussions around issues of interest, then this group may fulfill its mission just fine,” this person said describing the current style of operating. However, this person also offered another thought, “If the mission is to become much more powerful and reach the masses of people of the population, become a change agent or at least an awareness agent for the masses, then it has to have structure, finances, leadership and an organization that reaches out into all facets of the community.” It was suggested that this would be a large undertaking and it would also be complicated by the fact that the mission could overlap with other current community groups.

One member asked, “If we didn’t have the next one would anyone notice?” It seems that most members would answer yes to this question: they would notice. One person seemed to reflect the feelings of most members saying, “We don’t have the structure we need yet, but it is not formless. Right now if a few people walked away, it will die if we don’t build structure for it.” One member was rather blunt: “Are there other organizations that do what the Forum does? What the heck is a Forum? How do we define it?”

One member explained that the Forum’s structure must be based on the arrangement worked out with its three supporting organizations. Currently the Forum derives its nonprofit status through its relationship with Legacy, which is a 501(c)(3). Legacy has agreed to act as

Treasury for the Forum until the time when the Forum board decides to move forward with an application to the IRS for its own non-profit designation. “I like the fact that we aren’t a 501(c)(3),” said one member. “I’m proud we’ve been successful without being a formal organization.” Another member said, “At some point in the future, I would expect to see more separation between the supporting organizations and the Forum organization, but that would come later after it has grown up.” “You have to have that support,” said another, “but you also need to have separation between the needs of the board members’ organizations and the mission of the Forum.” A third commented, “We need clear lines between the sponsoring organizations and the Forum itself.” A fourth asked with some seriousness, “Does Mark have veto power?”

Those clear lines will not be in place until the pending Memorandum of Agreement is signed by each of the three sponsors explained a board member involved in this work. The yet unsigned MOA currently states that the three entities choose the members of the board. “Those organizations will select the board members, but not necessarily from their membership,” said a member who has worked on the MOA. “Everyone has agreed, but they just haven’t all signed it. We can go back and reword it if necessary.”

“The thing that has held this together so far is the communications,” suggested one of the founding members. “People communicating with each other and getting these programs going. Rather than most organizations have a solid structure and then they create programs. We have programs. We now have to create the solid structure.” There was agreement to this idea. As one member said, “A bias of mine is that I think any organization needs structure.”

Most members thought the best way to figure out organizational issues was through a Saturday board retreat. “We’ve sort of started with making the programs work and making things happen without nailing down the kind of structure that any organization needs to sustain itself

long-term. So a lot of work has to be done in that area,” commented a member. Members suggested looking to other organizations for structure ideas; using expertise available within the current board; drafting by-laws based on the finalized MOA; outlining the responsibilities of officers; rethinking the committee structure; and creating more formalized meeting agendas. Questions remain about what officer positions are needed, what committees are needed, how many people need to be on the board and on other committees. One person said, “I think we should keep the board workable—not too many people. I don’t know if that magic number is 12 or 20.” One member explained his thoughts on the board personality saying that strong leadership in the chair position is important.

Our chair needs to keep people focused on the agenda while still making sure all voices are heard. Although the board has been rather informal, the board can be more formalized, but it depends on the chair. The board will take on the personality of the chair, just like an organization takes on the personality of its leader. If the chair is strictly business, then that is how the meeting will go and that is how the members will behave. Another person talked about the involvement of Legacy members and the importance of Legacy leadership. “I do think that young people without baggage would be sooner seen as not having bias,” this person said.

To accomplish the task of providing the Forum more structure, several members commented that they had those skills and understood the need to use them to provide a stronger organization. “We have people who want to help, but they don’t know where they fit in. If you just ask, they’ll say ok,” said one board member. “The real responsibility does not rest on any one person’s shoulders to get things accomplished,” said another. A third said it was important to recognize that the Forum “can’t be dominated by one or a handful of people.” This person

believed that every body has to feel ownership and feel respected. Another person thought the timing was right to think about the structure now that the organization has a better understanding of how to address problems already encountered in the Forum's work.

What would be the benefits of a more defined structure? “Getting good policy in place and then having everyone understand that policy and implementing that policy as has been agreed to will strengthen the organization dramatically,” explained one board member. “One thing structure does is that it grounds people as they become new board members,” said another member. “It has to be meaningful, it has to be organized. We have to feel like our ideas are being accepted. And that's true of the board and the forums as well.” While talking about working together to put a new structure in place, one member commented, “My sense is that it has not been a really collective process. It seems like it (has been) more a program or decision being presented and there is acquiescence. Not always, but usually.”

How would you describe the process of decision making with the Forum board? Decision-making was described as “ad hoc,” “not been a really collective process,” and “one person who makes the decisions.” Said one member, “I haven't been impressed with the decision making because I felt that sometimes some people have skirted around the Steering Committee and doing what they wanted to do.” “We are making good decisions so far,” one member said. “However, many times things are already decided before they are brought before the board.” Another member felt that members were compliant. Others disagreed. “I think someone presents an idea and if there is general consensus, we go for it.” A second echoed that feeling saying, “I think everybody is comfortable with the decisions that have been made.” Another remarked, “I've seen discussions create consensus. I've seen dictatorial decisions counter to consensus. More often than not I've seen discussion progressing to consensus but no formal decision.”

Members recognized that taking a vote on an issue was rare. Some members suggested that voting on issues would help bring items of discussion to a conclusion. Generally, people preferred to vote after consensus is reached “Everybody needs to have the ability to voice their opinion and then express their opinion with a vote. If you don’t vote, you never bring anything to a conclusion.” Another member said it this way: “There is value in people really feeling like they had a part in building something.”

It was suggested that decision-making concerns would be partly solved with a more robust organizational structure and by-laws. Additionally, one member said, “What we need is more active participation from all members.” A third thought listening was important.

I think as individuals trying to make decisions we have some people who like to talk a lot. I think sometimes people need to realize that they need to listen. You know the Stephen Covey seek first to understand before seeking to be understood. We all need to think about that.

What are your thoughts on how information flows among board members? Most board members believed that information and how it flows could not be addressed until organizational issues were addressed. “A lot of the things that have been problems for us come back to structure,” said one member. The predominant type of communication among the board outside of board meetings was considered email, although it was noted that there is inconsistency in who is included in distribution lists. The predominant content was considered details of events. One member said, “When I look back over what has been done, the program chair sets the expectations and the way things are done—the individual’s work style. I don’t know how we get to a Forum work style.”

In considering what should be exchanged, suggestions were any new development that people need to know about, continual updates, any roadblocks to success, follow-up to events, clearly defined roles for people, minutes of meetings, and information about strategic planning and fund raising. It was suggested “very vigorous and creative information should flow among the working groups however they are defined.” Concerning board meetings the same member said, “We have unrequited business that we end up talking about in the parking lot. We leave with unfinished business.” That person noted that a lot of important work is done outside the board meeting.

Two members connected the importance of a strategic plan with what information is shared. “By not having a strategic plan we get off mission,” said one member, which becomes particularly important in setting the meeting agenda and adding structure to meetings.”

“We have to create an environment where people won’t think it is a waste of their time to be involved,” a member noted. Another member mentioned meeting agendas. “Without the pre-published agendas; without the focus of conversation, topics and issues, it seems like we go to meetings with a blank slate. I come to the meeting unfocused and react to things. It may be a reflection of my disappointment with the board meetings that I see us spending very little time on this,” the member explained.

How do you know what you need to send to others? “It depends” seemed to be the overriding answer. Said one member, “I send it to whoever I believe has a vested interest. I usually do it through email.” At this time, the Forum does not have formal or informal rules about what should be sent to whom. Suggestions included assigning gatekeeper duties to chairs of ad hoc committees and then providing all other information to all board members; assigning the chair and vice chair responsibility for communicating to board members as a part of their job

descriptions; and being more directive about email communication by sending to people what would most interest them rather than sending everything to everybody. One member reported trying to learn the customs by getting involved in a Forum event to learn “what has been done before,” which led to a suggestion to begin collecting best practices.

Is the information you receive adequate for you to participate as a board member? Six members who addressed this question all said yes, but with qualifications. One member said that sometimes it is too much information. Another said it would be good to have a checklist of what needs to be done. “I’m not an event planner,” the member explained. Another said that there are many issues that need to be discussed that haven’t been. “There are issues we need to talk about like the clickers,” the member said. Another was concerned about the timeliness of information. “I need some time to absorb things,” the member said. “I would have liked it if I could have seen it before the meeting,” the member continued, “maybe being able to listen and get to know the organization more before I weigh in.” One member said, “I think I get the best information that is available. With the right structure someone would be responsible for getting more data to us.”

How would you describe discussions during board meetings? The most common way that board members talked about board meeting discussions was to reference back to the latest meeting, which had taken place on March 12. Since all interviews took place between March 12 and March 24, this board meeting discussion was fresh for those who had attended. Every person interviewed who had attended the March 12 meeting gave high marks to the discussion the board had about the proposed partnership with the anti-smoking group. Everyone thought that the Forum board needed to have more conversations like that one. When asked what was different about that discussion, various explanations were given: everyone participated; the discussion was open and honest; the proposal was written and explained the issue and the organization making

the request; the issue was controversial; the speaker invited members to discuss the request; the pros and cons were weighed; all questions and concerns were addressed; consensus was sought; once consensus was evident, a vote was taken to finalize the discussion into a decision. “The main thing to me was whether this aligned with our mission,” said one member. Another commented, “In the past, issues weren’t framed as a fundamental question. Things are usually about execution.” On a positive note when considering the future of the Forum, one member said, “As long as the group is able to talk like that, we should be able to work through things.”

The general discussions at board meetings over the past eight months were not regarded as highly. One member said, “When we talk about operational vs. oversight issues, I think we bleed into the minutia, into how we get things done. If we had the ad hoc committees set up and reporting back to us, then that would probably change the amount of time we spend on certain issues and it would change the context of the conversations we have.” Another suggested, “The dialogue we want to have in the forums start in the board meeting; we bring our own perspectives and end up discussing issues rather than the organization ... we don’t take the 30,000 feet view and work toward the mission.”

What about communication with other audiences? “I also think we’ve done a decent job trying to market,” said one member. When asked if the work could be done by the committee responsible for a specific event rather than a marketing committee, the member replied, “My concern is that it won’t get done. As long as someone has oversight, we should be in good shape.” Others voiced concerns about not having a web site, not having a checklist for marketing events, not having email lists of prior Forum participants, and the like. One member remarked that being more efficient in producing materials that can be used for more than one meeting will

save money, but more important, will build recognition of the brand through repetition of the visual image.

When considering the Forum programming, one member commented that “they have actually evolved more into events than discussions.” This member expected that Forum programs would be more of guided discussions or prompted discussions that might be smaller in number as far as the people attending. The expectation was for in depth discussion by audience members. “I think some of our upcoming events will lend themselves more toward that,” this member said, “but I would like to move toward getting people to think much more in depth and share ideas and really get some of the problem resolution.” More than one member noted that the opportunity for the diversity event will give the organization broader participation and more in depth discussions. Previous programs were described as “heavily scripted.” “For what we’ve chosen to do that has worked, the member said, “But if we get more to dialogue, less scripting will be in order. Whatever we do, we need to do them right.”

Stories told about communication experiences. Board members were asked to share details of a communication experience, either one that was effective or one that was ineffective. The stories told about effective communication experiences had many similarities. When effective communication experiences were described board members were clear about their own role in the communication taking place. They knew who else and why each person was involved. People were prepared and committed to the effort. Participants also had prior knowledge about the discussion to take place or were provided enough information at the time of the communication event to be able to take part in the discussion. If it was an ongoing communication process, timely updates were provided to interested parties. Details that needed

to be considered were given the appropriate time and attention. The right amount of time was scheduled to accomplish the goal of the communication experience.

The ineffective communication experiences also had similarities. More than one board member told a story where information from one meeting had to be repeated in detail at another meeting. The problem was that new people—new both to the board itself, to the topic or to the discussion—wanted to change decisions that had already been made. In several stories the board member didn't know all the people who were involved in the communication. They talked about meetings where the discussion didn't follow the agenda, or where no agenda was being used. They also expressed concerns about some discussions being emotional rather than factual, or where body language closed out other opinions. Other stories told about problems with communication outside of board meetings. In one case there was an inability to get board members to respond to a question and in another there was a concern that more input should have been requested, but was not.

Is there anything I left out that I should have included? Issues that surfaced in this last segment of the interviews included a suggestion to benchmark against other young organizations to compare communication efforts, desire from several participants for the Forum to create a web presence, and a concern about over-reliance on the clickers for audience engagement. Another issue voiced by more than one participant was a concern that the Forum's identity is too closely linked to NKU's. Although members expressed appreciation of NKU's support, there is a recognition that it comes at a price to the Forum's ability to stand on its own. Standing on its own also means having the manpower to put on quality events. Some members are concerned about whether the Forum has that ability or can ever build the financial capacity.

Questions about a common message were on several people’s minds as well as concerns about the board’s common vocabulary. Should the idea of the “public square” be used in describing the Forum? How should the history of the Forum be captured so new members know the background? In that same vein, one participant felt that the Forum should not be afraid of advocacy groups. He believed that they can be educational. Another questioned whether the Forum should rely on the list of issues generated by Vision 2015 saying that the vision didn’t capture enough people outside the usual business groups.

In a concluding discussion about the Forum’s future, one participant commented on the need to have a constant infusion of people commitment, and new ideas because “our attention spans are what they are.” He was concerned that too much time would be devoted to “it being grand and huge,” and not enough to dialogue. He suggested, “Good programming with people showing up saying ‘I got something out of that. I was able to express something I wanted to express.’ Do we have to have one every month? Let’s not kill ourselves, let’s concentrate on having something good.” Another member summarized with recognition that the board has been gaining wisdom as it moves toward its one-year anniversary. He said, “We are learning about ourselves as well as about the potential audiences.”

Appendix I

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

The Northern Kentucky Forum (Forum) is a nonpartisan organization whose members will encourage fellow local citizens to be informed and actively participate in government. The Forum aspires to increase citizen understanding and discussion of public policy issues that affect the region, state, and nation. The idea of the Forum is simple: Hold gatherings seven to ten times a year where all of Northern Kentucky's citizens are invited to examine a public issue on our community's agenda. Sometimes the format will be straightforward (a speaker taking questions from the audience), and other times the format will be more innovative such as the mock trial that was held in October 2008.

FORUM KEY PRINCIPLES

- ◆ Be a safe place for difficult conversations on public issues.
- ◆ Attract a diverse audience and aim always to include, not exclude.
- ◆ Advocate for dialogue and for an informed public, but not for any one position.
- ◆ Provide a format conducive to audience input.
- ◆ Allow all sides of an issue to be represented in the discussion.

BROAD SUPPORT

The Forum is a partnership project of three well-known Northern Kentucky nonprofit organizations: Legacy, the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement at Northern Kentucky University and Vision 2015.

ISSUES CHOSEN BY VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are responsible for examining and recommending issues that will resonate with the public and how these issues could best be presented by the Forum.

FIND OUT ABOUT THE NEXT FORUM

The Forum's first two events were at Northern Kentucky University. Future events will move around to other public venues in Northern Kentucky, including public libraries and schools. To find out where and when the next Forum will be, and what topic will be discussed, get on the mailing list. Just e-mail neikirk1@nku.edu with your contact information (e-mail and mailing address).

FORUM OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Increase public dialogue as well as awareness of the need for public dialogue.
- ◆ Amplify a regional dialogue across Northern Kentucky's city and county boundaries.
- ◆ Assure that the dialogue is civil and informative.
- ◆ Find ways to convey the Forum's findings to the public.
- ◆ Increase citizen engagement.

JOIN IN ... GET INVOLVED

- ◆ Upcoming topics for the Forum are tentatively planned to include public education; energy policy; and diversity in our region.
- ◆ You can participate in the planning of future Forums by contacting the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement at (859) 572-1448 or by sending an e-mail to neikirkm1@nku.edu. Your interest will be conveyed to the Forum's Program Committee.
- ◆ To offset expenses, the Forum would welcome your contribution to cover our costs. Make checks to "LEGACY" and put "Northern Kentucky Forum" in the memo line. Mail to:
Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement
Northern Kentucky University
Founders Hall
536 Nunn Drive
Highland Heights, KY 41099.

Appendix J

NKY FORUM PRESENTS

CREATION SCIENCE

Is it **science** or **religion**?
Does it belong in the classroom?
In which classroom: Biology or Sunday School?
What's the law say?
What do educators say?

EVOLUTION

Is it **theory** or **fact**?
Should scientists challenge it?
Does the public understand it?
Can the law protect it?
Should the law protect it?



YOU DECIDE MOCK TRIAL *at* NKU

6:30 P.M.
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22
OTTO M. BUDIG THEATER

Local attorneys **Margo Grubbs** and **Phil Taliaferro** will square off over these questions, with the audience acting as a jury. Join us for this free event.

 **NORTHERN KENTUCKY**
forum

 SCRIPPS
HOWARD
CENTER
for CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

 NKU SALMON P. CHASE
COLLEGE OF LAW
Center for Excellence in Advocacy

Appendix K



Leading Businesses.
Leading Communities.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY MEMBERS ABOUT US GOVERNMENT BUSINESS WORK

NKY Forum: Media Literacy

Please Note --> This is a Past Event!!

Date: 1/29/2009

Time: 6:30 PM TO 8:30 PM

Event Description:

Should you trust the messenger? Method, meaning and media in the 2008 campaign

Join John Lomax, Co-Anchor of Channel 12's "Good Morning Cincinnati" as he moderates a panel of media and political experts to discuss media and messages using the 2008 presidential campaign. 2008 was a watershed election in presidential politics for multi-media use, especially the introduction of such "new" media as blogs and YouTube. With the new crowded media playing field, how do you know which messages and messengers to trust?

Panelists: Suzanne Cassidy, Partner, O'Hara, Ruberg, Taylor, Sloan & Sergent • Pat Crowley, Political Writer, Kentucky Enquirer • Jimmie Manning, PhD, Communication Graduate Program Director, Assistant Professor, Communication, College of Informatics; Affiliate Professor, Gender Studies, College of Arts & Sciences, Northern Kentucky University • Laura Deaton Morarity, Account Supervisor, Wordsworth Communications • Richard L. Robinson, Partner, Graydon Head & Ritchey LLP

Directions:

We do not take reservations as this is a walk in event. This is open to the general public, everyone is welcome.

Need more information?

If you need more information about this event, please complete the fields below:

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EVENT LOCATION

Boone County Public Library

1786 Burlington Pike
Burlington, KY 41005
[Event Location Map](#)

Phone:

(859) 578-8800

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