

# **What do you really mean by philanthropy? Challenging assumptions and defining underpinnings**

## **A philosophical exploration with colleagues**

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### **Description**

This document was developed for use in a workshop at the 2004 AFP Toronto Congress. The workshop was designed for individuals who want to explore the philosophical issues related to the philanthropic sector.

What do we mean by a philosophy? It's the Greek word for wisdom. The dictionary defines philosophy as all learning excluding technical precepts and practical arts. Philosophy is about exploring the meaning of things and the values behind those things; exploring the why and discovering truths.

Dialogue topics include: Values, vocation and career. A culture of greed or a culture of philanthropy. Power and privilege in governance and fund development. Philanthropy as a democratizing act. Traditional philanthropy and social change philanthropy, who wins.

### **Session format**

Simone will present her perspective on a particular subject, followed by a series of questions. Participants and Simone will dialogue – questioning, challenging assumptions, raising diverse opinions, identifying new dimensions and questions. Simone will facilitate the discussion.

At various points, the full group will break down into small groups and continue the dialogue. In the small groups, participants have the opportunity to expand the conversation about a topic of particular interest to the small group.

#### Outline for each topic:

1. Perspective from Joyaux
2. What's your reaction?
3. Some questions to consider
4. What questions does this perspective raise for you?

### **Topics discussed in this session**

1. Values, vocation and career (Page 4)
2. A culture of greed or a culture of philanthropy (Page 5)
3. The politics of power: used (but hidden?) in philanthropy (Page 6)
4. Philanthropy as a democraticizing act (Page 9)

## **Dialogue and questions** (See specific handouts on pages 11 – 14.)

Do we actually talk enough in our organizations or in our public life? Do we have sufficient public discourse to learn and make quality decisions?

Do we actually dialogue or are we too busy advocating for our own position? (I know this is a personal challenge of mine.)

We are social beings. We connect through conversation. That's how we learn. (Read about the titmice and robins in rural England, a story told by Arie de Geus, former strategic planner for Royal Dutch Shell and a major player in learning organization theory. I tell this story in my book.)

Through conversations we build shared knowledge and generate new insights. We make commitments and organize for action.

Good conversation depends upon good questions. The questions we ask are as important as, even more important than, finding the right answers. (And I'm talking about genuine questions, not artificial devices used to narrow and control.)

Questions serve as catalysts for change. Questions bring people together and attract people and resources to our organizations.

Asking questions means we must suspend our own assumptions about "what is right" and "what is best." We need to listen to others and question our own assumptions rather than advocate for our own opinion. Consider what our colleague Karla Williams, ACFRE says: "Pursuit of knowledge is based on asking questions and questioning the answers." And I would add, "asking the questions that matter in the first place."

Asking these questions that matter also means encouraging varied opinions and even disagreement. Conflict is inevitable. It's part of all human interaction and certainly part of group decision-making. Conflict is also healthy. It helps keep a group lively and alive. (By the way, there is a national project called "The Right Question Project" that helps build civic capacity and helps empower people to define and address issues by asking the right questions.)

## **Values – yours and your organization's**

Have you articulated your own values? Has your organization articulated its values?

A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct is personally or socially preferable to another.

Individuals have values. These values guide our actions and judgments. Our values are the standards that influence us as we make choices among alternative courses of action. Value systems are relatively permanent frameworks that shape and influence our behavior.

Groups have values too. The key is, the group must articulate its values. These shared values then provide the framework that guides the actions and judgments of the group.

Groups (and organizations) operate best through consensus and unity of purpose and action. This means that the individual's values must match those of the collective entity. This "values match" is essential to the health and effectiveness of the group and is essential to the well being of the individual participant.

Values "define the enduring character of the organization." (James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, "Building Your Company's Vision, *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1996.) These values are nurtured for their own sake, as the foundation of the organization. As Ralph S. Larsen, CEO of Johnson & Johnson says, "We have [values] because they define for us what we stand for, and we would hold them even if they became a competitive disadvantage in certain situations." (Ibid.)

Articulating values is one of the most important things that an organization does. Too often, groups go forth, stating, “everyone knows what we value.” All too often, conflict emerges – and it’s a values conflict because that which was implied was not made explicit.

This session – what you think are the underpinnings of philanthropy – is all about values. What are your values? What are the values of your organization? What are the values of philanthropy?

### **Your courage and mine**

Challenging assumptions takes courage. Questioning one’s own assumptions and questioning the assumptions of others is hard work.

Some – perhaps all – of the topics raised in this session may cause discomfort in you and within your organization and its participants.

Challenging assumptions. Questioning the status quo. Raising difficult issues. Courage.

I think that is the nature of philanthropy. Think about Bob Payton’s definition: voluntary action for the common good. The common good. The good of the commons, where we meet as community. Creating a civil society and civic capacity.

I think that we are responsible for – and should be proud of – making people uncomfortable, not just comfortable.

What do you think? Is this what you signed up for – either in this session or in your work?

### **Other resources**

Visit my website for assorted resources, a booklist, and lots of links to other websites. )

- *Axis of Ideology: Conservative Foundations and Public Policy*, Jeff Krehely, Meaghan House, Emily Kernan, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy ([www.ncrp.org](http://www.ncrp.org))
- *Clicks and Mortar*, David Pottruck and Terry Pearce
- *Dialogue: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation*, Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard
- *Inspired Philanthropy: Creating a Giving Plan*, Tracy Gary and Melissa Kohner
- *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*, Barbara Ehrenreich
- *Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money for Social Change*, Chuck Collins and Pam Rogers
- *Understanding Social Justice Philanthropy*, John Hunsaker and Brenda Hanzl, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
- *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Malcolm Gladwell

## 1. Values, vocation and career

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### Perspective

Thoughts from *The Song of the River: A Study of Vocation in the Lives of Fundraisers*, Sharilyn Hale, CFRE.

“Spend some quality time around fundraising professionals and it won’t take long for one or two to express the meaning and satisfaction they gain from their work. For some, this comes from generally knowing that, through their efforts, they are helping organizations achieve their missions, which in turn benefit society in a myriad of ways. For others, there is an added sense of personal calling they bring to their work. They claim fundraising is in fact an expression of vocation, motivating them, inspiring passion and nurturing in them a sense of purpose and personal mission...

“Numerous leaders in the philanthropic sector have challenged fundraising professionals to be more than mere fundraising technicians. These leaders suggest there should be a corresponding alignment of personal values, commitment, passion and vision for the change we would like to see in the world.”

Hale’s study concludes: “Philanthropic organizations, by their very nature, can be viewed as centres of vocation embraced and expressed. And those working in these organizations may be participating in vocation. Fundraising engages people in the purpose and practice of philanthropy, affirming a link between fundraising and vocation – where fundraising professionals may rightly view their work as a call to serve others. This vocational view can engage people in a process of personal and collective reflection...

“Vocation can help fundraising professionals understand the value of their work to the world as well as the value of their work to themselves... These professionals make connections between their values, passions and identify and understand how their call impacts those around them. They claim to be part of something bigger than themselves yet embrace their call with humility and grace...

“Fundraising workplaces within philanthropic organizations would benefit from being supportive of vocation. A strong culture of philanthropy in an organization can prepare the way for a culture of vocation. Such a culture would provide a forum for colleagues to reflect and question each other on the role of fundraising in the community, both within and outside of the organization, and the meaning of the work.”

### What’s your reaction?

#### Some questions to consider:

1. Vocation, philanthropy, fundraising and fundraisers: So what? Does the concept of vocation enhance the profession? How or how not?
2. Does philanthropy itself (love of humankind / voluntary action for the common good) benefit from the concept of vocation? How or how not?
3. What is the role of professional fundraising associations in the promotion of vocation in addition to career development?
4. What role might vocation play in your work and in the work of your organization?
5. How would you put this issue on the table and stimulate dialogue within your organization? In your professional association?

### What questions does this perspective raise for you?

## **2. A culture of greed or a culture of philanthropy**

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### **Perspective**

How many times have you heard (or said) that there is competition for charitable contributions in your community?

I don't understand this. Competition is about scarcity. Competition implies limits.

And of course, competition – scarcity – seems to produce greed.

I don't believe there is competition. I do believe there is congestion. I don't think in terms of scarcity or greed. I think in terms of challenges and opportunities.

Maybe I'm just naïve. And hey, as a consultant, I'm not responsible for any bottom line!

But even when I was on staff, I was equally interested in the community – not focused only on my organization.

Am I naïve? Am I out of touch?

I see competition and greed in the eyes of staff and board members – described as passion and commitment to their own particular cause.

I see a sense of entitlement – money deserved for doing good work – and an arrogance – more money owed because we do good work.

And I think that our profession and we as fundraisers promote entitlement, arrogance, and competition. And that seems to produce a culture of greed.

A tiny example of a culture of greed – investing our money for the optimum return, without considering socially responsible investing. I hear organizations saying that optimum investment allows the organization to advance its mission and serve more and better. Indeed yes. But investment without considering social responsibility reinforces politics and privilege and devalues equity and the good of the commons.

I have this vision of a culture of philanthropy – within each organization – and within the community as a whole. I see fundraising professionals from diverse organizations talking together about the good of the community, not just the needs of their respective organizations. I see boards and staff passionate about the community, not competing for money for their own organization.

### **What's your reaction?**

#### **Some questions to consider:**

1. What is organizational culture and how do we nurture culture within our own organization?
2. Are distinctions between competition and congestion useful or rather a waste of time?
3. What does a culture of greed look and feel like and how does it affect an organization, its people, and the community?
4. What does a culture of philanthropy look and feel like and how does it affect an organization, its people, and the community?
6. How would you put this issue on the table and stimulate dialogue within your organization? In your professional association?

### **What questions does this perspective raise for you?**

### 3. The politics of power – used (but hidden?) in philanthropy

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#### Perspective

I think politics are alive and well in philanthropy. (And often justified by institutional arrogance: “We need money because we do good and politics makes the world go round so we use politics too.” Perhaps politics aren’t hidden in philanthropy, merely masked with self-righteousness.)

My experience is that we seem to accept these politics as the status quo – and even reinforce them – either intentionally or because we haven’t identified them and haven’t explored an alternative.

What exactly does power mean?

The dictionary says: possession of control, authority, jurisdiction or influence. These are not particularly positive words.

The most common exercise of power is based on privilege – the privilege of money, race / ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. And the intersection of these privileges increases – or decreases – the power of privilege.

Consider the individuals and corporations (either for-profit or nonprofit) that we typically identify as the most powerful. Consider the nature of their power.

Consider the corrupting influence of power: “One uses power by grasping it lightly. To grasp with too much force is to be taken over by power, thus becoming its victim.” (*Dune: House Harkonnen*)

Think about privilege as the driving nature of power:

Let’s consider me, Simone Joyaux: I have inherent power because I’m white, well educated, and affluent although not wealthy, and I’m heterosexual. I am disadvantaged because I am a woman. These are all documented privileges of the powerful in the U.S. How about in Canada or other western nations? What are the attributes of privilege in other countries?

How many of you have seen *Angels in America* – either on stage or on HBO? Roy Cohn, at one time one of the most powerful men in the U.S., says he does not have AIDS because homosexuals have AIDS and homosexuals have no power – and he, Roy Cohn, has power. (Cohn died of AIDS in 1986.)

Just take a look at the civil rights of people of color in North America. More people of color are in jail and are poor. There are fewer people of color heading up Fortune 500 companies and major foundations and and and...

Take a look at women. Women are almost as disadvantaged as people of color. Do you know what boys say when asked, “what it means to be a man?” 13 items\* including “power,” “strong,” “bully,” “sex,” “don’t cry,” and “don’t be a girl.” Some boys indicated that they would kill themselves if they woke up one morning and found they were girls. Talk about the perception of power and privilege.

\*All 13 items are: Pressure, Strong, Independent, Bully, Don’t be a girl, Sex, Confident, Denial of feelings, Don’t cry, Silent, Do it, Power, Don’t ask.

Think about the history of philanthropy.

I began what I consider my professional career in 1975, working in a nonprofit organization. I immediately became a donor and embraced philanthropy and the nonprofit sector.

I'm 56 years old now. My own philanthropic journey has included the exploration of progressive philanthropy and social justice.

But this was a personal journey – never anything explored in my continuing education as a fundraising professional. Nothing I read in mainstream philanthropic publications. No substantive mention of social change philanthropy in history books. Am I reading the wrong books?

Think about the philanthropic profession.

Why is there such a focus on traditional philanthropy and so little inclusion of information about progressive philanthropy and social justice? I think this focus is a result of the politics of power and privilege, and the power of the status quo.

I look at all my learnings in this profession about influential board members and fundraising volunteers and major donors. And these learnings typically focus on definitions related to privilege, which results in power.

I hear fundraising colleagues – on staff and consultants – talking about:

- Getting people of influence on the board to help get big gifts and special favors.
- Keeping board members who do nothing but give big gifts – which is not an acceptable definition of being a good board member.
- Designing campaigns based on affluence and influence.
- Making sure that some of the kids admitted to the school are from socially powerful families because social capital is so important.
- Retaining executive committees without examining the inherent power dynamics.
- Recognizing donors by gift amount, which is about privilege.

All of this is about privilege. And that means someone has more privilege than someone else. I ask you: why?

For many nations, philanthropy has been dominated by the European noblesse oblige attitude. When you accumulate lots of dollars, you're obligated to help those "les fortunate". That's charity.

And it seems to me that there's certain arrogance in this approach. It's as if my money or status gives the donor special power and makes the donor worthier than those who need help. And soon it's the donors and other experts deciding how to use the money for the disadvantaged rather than including the disadvantaged in defining their own solutions.

Take a look around.

There is a growing disparity between the haves and have nots in many countries.

Haves and have nots are all about the power of privilege and the destruction of social justice and affirmation of social injustice.

Research in the U.S. shows that more than 90% of philanthropic gifts go to what may be called traditional philanthropy – described as “responding to, treating and managing the consequences of life in a society with a capital-based economy.” I'll bet that's the case in many countries of the world.

Traditional philanthropy takes care of the environment and education and the arts and healthcare. Traditional philanthropy also takes care of traditional charities, e.g., feeding the hungry and clothing the poor and educating the low income.

But so many of these charitable acts could also be called the Band-Aid approach. We feed the hungry instead of changing the inequities that produce hunger.

Have you noticed that the less social justice we have, the more we need philanthropy?

How ironic. We need more philanthropy because we refuse to deal with social injustice.

It seems that we prefer Band-Aids to systemic change because systemic change could hurt those of us who are privileged. We promote good quality of life – but not for everyone – rather than using the power of philanthropy to make social change and assure social justice.

### **What's your reaction?**

#### **Some questions to consider:**

1. What is the nature of politics in philanthropy? How do politics affect our organizations, philanthropy, and our profession?
2. How do the politics of philanthropy affect us as professionals, our career, our sense of vocation?
3. So what? Do politics really matter in philanthropy?
4. What do we mean by a civil society and civic capacity? What is the role of the third sector in creating a civil society and civic capacity? How do politics affect civil society and civic capacity?
5. What is the role of professional fundraising associations in the promotion of social change philanthropy, as well as traditional philanthropy?
7. How would you put this issue on the table and stimulate dialogue within your organization? In your professional association?

### **What questions does this perspective raise for you?**

## 4. Philanthropy as a democratizing act

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### Perspective

My view is that philanthropy is *not* particularly democratic. I believe that we have designed philanthropy as an act of traditional power and privilege.

I see this in three specific ways:

- In general, we focus on affluence in philanthropy, and in governance and fund development. And affluence often is seen at the intersection of gender, race and sexual orientation.
- Most gifts are given to traditional philanthropy to fund things like the arts and education and healthcare and the environment and helping those in need.
- And the gifts given to helping those in need do not typically address systemic change but rather are pulling babies from the river because those who are privileged too often prefer the status quo.

Of course it is wonderful to have charity and traditional philanthropy. We all want clean air and arts organizations and we want to feed and clothe the poor. All this is good.

But I don't think that traditional philanthropy needs to be the dominant face of philanthropy. I think that we should all be aware of both traditional and progressive philanthropy. Both aspects should be presented in books and discussed regularly.

And for me, there is something bigger – more important than simply acknowledging progressive philanthropy: I actually want philanthropy to be democratic. I want philanthropy to be a strategy to democratize our communities and our organizations. I want shared power.

Wait a minute: is “democracy” the right word? I want justice. I want equity. So what do justice and equity mean: fairness, impartiality, opportunity, shared power and responsibility in all spheres of personal and community life.

So is “democracy” the right word? Only when we define democracy as: “absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions or privileges,” or “power vested in the people and exercised by them,” “the people as the source of political authority.”

What would happen if philanthropy were actually democratic? What would happen if we defined power as equitable and just?

Let me be very clear. Equity (and what I think democracy should be) is anti privilege. Equity is about diversity and shared power. Democratizing philanthropy would empower those who don't have as much privilege – or any privilege according to traditional definitions. (And remember, those who are less affluent give a higher % of their income than do the more affluent. Keep in mind that those who are “under-privileged” actually should have a say in how to change their lives and how to use your charitable gifts.)

What would happen if more philanthropic dollars went to produce social change so that we could create social justice?

Progressive or social change philanthropy is defined as: Analyzing and responding to causes more than effect. Progressive or social change philanthropy challenges the assumptions that economic and social inequities are somehow unavoidable as the price of progress or prosperity. This kind of philanthropy shakes up the status quo – and that might be uncomfortable for many of us who are privileged. But that is what social justice is all about. But giving money should include taking action to right the imbalances of an unjust society and an unequal distribution of resources – and it seems to me we don't focus on this enough.

I believe that philanthropy can, should and must amplify the voices that are traditionally ignored. Let me use the words of others, which so inspire me:

- "Creating social change is exciting. It's proof that we are alive and thinking. What could be better than to work for a future where fairness is the bottom line?" (Alfre Woodard in the Preface to *Robin Hood Was Right*)
- "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one of us directly, affects all indirectly.... Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice that makes philanthropy necessary." (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Robin Hood Was Right*)
- Let's say it was 24 hours before you were born, and a genie appeared and said: "What I'm going to do is let you set the rules of the society into which you will be born. You can set the economic rules and the social rules, and whatever rules you set will apply during your lifetime and your children's lifetimes and even the lifetimes of your grandchildren."  
And you'll say, "Well, that's nice. I get to define what kind of world I want to live in. But what's the catch?"  
And the genie says, "Here's the catch. You don't know if you're going to be born poor or rich, black or white, female or male, inform or able-bodied, homosexual or heterosexual, retarded or intelligent."  
Now what rules do you want to have? [From John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 1971. As told by Warren Buffet and re-told by Joyaux]

### **What's your reaction?**

#### **Some questions to consider:**

1. What do you observe about the politics of power in philanthropy? So what? Does it matter?
2. How familiar are you with social change / progressive philanthropy? Is traditional philanthropy enough to create a civil society?
3. Why is social change / progressive philanthropy the poor and often forgotten stepchild in our communities and in our nations?
4. What role do professional associations currently play in reinforcing the status quo or facilitating dialogue about social change? So what?
5. Do you think philanthropy should be democratic? Does it really matter? Why or why not?
6. Are you committed to using philanthropy to help create equity? How might you do this work? What would be the effect on your development operation?
7. Are those of us who work and volunteer in the philanthropic sector committed to using philanthropy to help create equity? Do we have the "desperate and lonely courage required to challenge the accepted wisdom upon which social peace of mind rests."? (*Dune: House Harkonnen*)
8. How would you put this issue on the table and stimulate dialogue within your organization? In your professional association?

### **What questions does this perspective raise for you?**

## Conversation is a Core Business Practice

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“Imagine that ‘the grapevine’ is not a poisonous plant to be cut off at the roots, but a natural source of vitality to be cultivated and nourished...”

“Consider...that the most widespread and pervasive learning in your organization may not be happening in training rooms, conference rooms, or boardrooms, but in the cafeteria, hallways, and the café across the street. Imagine that through email exchanges, phone visits and bull sessions with colleagues, people at all levels of the organization are sharing critical business knowledge, exploring underlying assumptions, and creating innovative solutions to key business issues.”

[Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, “Conversation as a Core Business Practice,” *The Systems Thinker Newsletter*, Volume 7, Number 10, December 1996-January 1997.]

- Informal networks of learning conversations are a key business practice.
- Communities of practice build social capital – and social capital makes organizations work. Do you see gatherings of UPS trucks?
- Conversation has the power to generate new insight and committed action. “An organization’s results are determined through webs of human commitment, born in webs of human conversations.” (Fernando Flores)
- Talking catalyzes action! – So encourage talking.
- Innovation happens at the grassroots level as people share common interests, concerns and questions.
- Promote ongoing conversation through dialogue, the process of collective thinking and generative learning.
- Conversation is the lifeblood of the new economy. (Alan Webber)
- Create physical environments that encourage knowledge-generating conversations.
- Use the Intranet (but don’t eliminate the face-to-face meetings that are essential to building social capital.)

Always remember the titmice and robins in rural England – a story told by Arie de Geus, former strategic planner for Royal Dutch Shell, and a guru of learning organizations and systems thinking.

## **Conversation (and dialogue) is different than discussion.**

[From *Dialogue: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation*, by Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard]

Discussion focuses on advocacy. I'm sharing my position with you and trying to convince you to sign on.

### **Advocacy**

- Stating one's views.
- Describing what I think
- Disclosing how I feel
- Expressing my judgments
- Urging a course of action
- Giving an order

#### High quality advocacy

- Providing data and explaining how you move from these data to your view of the situation.

### **Inquiry**

- Asking a (meaningful not rhetorical!) question
- Seeking information

#### High quality inquiry

- Seeking the views of others, probing how the others arrived at that view
- Encouraging others to challenge your own perspective

Balancing high quality advocacy and high quality inquiry makes significant learning possible.

**Dialogue:** A particular set of conversational practices designed to help create and sustain learning and collaborative partnerships.

1. See the "whole" of issues: systems thinking
2. Suspend judgment in order to hear the rationale behind the thinking of others.
3. Identify and suspend assumptions because assumptions produce judgments.
4. Unquestioned assumptions hamper listening and learning.
5. Listen – without resistance – in order to learn
  - a) Listening to others
  - b) Listening for your own judgments, assumptions and questions
  - c) Listening for the collective themes emerging from the dialogue
6. Release the need for a specific outcome.
7. Suspend role and status
8. Respect differences
9. Share responsibility and leadership for the dialogue process

- 10. Speak to the group – to the collective intelligence
- 11. Speak when you're moved to speak
- 12. Balance inquiry and advocacy

**David Bohm, physicist: Fragmentation of human thought**

- In a rapidly shifting and troubled world, Bohm believed we desperately need a common pool of meaning in order to take coherent action together.
- We create this common pool of meaning by learning to think together in new ways. Thinking together in new ways happens through conversation and dialogue.

<b>Dialogue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Seeing the <i>whole</i> among the parts	Breaking issues / problems into <i>parts</i>
Seeing <i>connections</i> between the parts	Seeing <i>distinctions</i> between the parts
<i>Inquiring</i> into assumptions	<i>Justifying / defending</i> assumptions
<i>Learning</i> through inquiry and disclosure	<i>Persuading, selling, telling</i>
Creating <i>shared</i> meaning among many possibilities	Gaining agreement on <i>one</i> meaning

# Asking the “Right”\* Questions

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\* “Right” questions means the questions that are meaningful and essential to your organization and your situation.

“When you ask a question, do you truly want to know the answer, or are you merely flaunting your power?” (*Dune: House Harkonnen*)

“A good question is never answered. It is not a bolt to be tightened into place but a seed to be planted and to bear more seed toward the hope of greening the landscape of the idea.” (John Ciardi, from *75 Cage-Rattling Questions to Change the Way You Work*)

➤ **Your responsibility:**

- Asking the “right” (meaningful) questions and then use those questions to refresh and reform your organization.
- Engaging your organization in dialogue / conversation.

➤ **Here are some ideas:**

1. What’s happening? Who cares? Why does it matter? What can be done about it? (Some things that are happening don’t matter!)
2. What is important for this organization to talk about? Why? What isn’t important to talk about and why?
3. What change – if made in your organization – would enhance the organization?
4. What skill – if you acquired it – would enhance the organization?
5. What idea would get you fired? Promoted?
6. What idea seems impossible – but if executed well – would dramatically change your organization?
7. What would you do if you knew you could not fail?
8. What incremental activities would produce momentum and the momentum in turn would move the organization forward?
9. What tangible evidence does your organization need in order to build confidence among employees and volunteers?
10. What can you (or your organization) be the best in the world at – and what can you not be best at?
11. What is the key economic factor that best drives your economic engine?
12. What are your core people passionate about?
13. What would your organization look like if it operated like a natural system does? If it ran according to the principles that guide natural systems?

Simone P. Joyaux, ACFRE. Inspired by systems thinking and learning organization theory, and stimulated by *75 Cage-Rattling Questions to Change the Way You Work* by Dick Whitney and Melissa Giovagnoli, McGraw Hill