

## EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

Hira L. Fotedar  
Chairman, WINOC and President, FOTEDAR ASSOCIATES LLC  
Cleveland, Ohio

*Definition of excellence (www) “top performance distinction, superiority; feature of an organizational entity that manifests how incomparably excellent it is when assessed adhering to success criteria; excellence refers always to excellent performance concerning something, e.g. in relation to one’s own goals, competitor’s performance, or best in the world.”*

### INTRODUCTION

These days Non-Profit community service organizations face significant challenges to meet their members and constituents growing needs and expectations. This is especially relevant to two U. S based Kashmiri Pandit organizations namely Kashmir Overseas Association (KOA) and Indo-American Kashmir Forum (IAKF). KOA is an organization that provides many social and cultural services to Kashmiri Pandit communities in this country and India. IAKF lobbies for Kashmiri Pandits’s political rights, counter disinformation campaign and strives for a safe, secure and peaceful Kashmir where Hindus can live with dignity and honor. Both KOA and IAKF are not-for profit organizations. There were some concerns that any political activism might compromise the tax exempt status of KOA-thus IAKF was created.

It is therefore timely that we examine and explore how to make KOA and IAKF excellent, enduring and growing organizations through the active participation of its elected officers, members and volunteers.

As Peter Drucker, the renowned management Guru notes in *Managing the Non-profit Organization: Principles and Practices*, “Today, we know that the non-profit institutions are central to American society.....We know the ability of government to perform social tasks is very limited indeed. But we also know that the non-profits discharge a much bigger job than taking care of specific needs....They also exemplify and fulfill the fundamental American commitment to responsible citizenship in the community.”

For the Kashmiri Pandit community to survive and grow we have to depend upon each other. Because of our small numbers, worldwide dispersal and lack of critical mass we cannot simply depend upon any government organization to help us. In India in particular, we have waited far too long to look for the government to take care of us. The question before us is how can we help each other and support ourselves and survive under difficult and challenging circumstances.

We can learn a lot by benchmarking other thriving communities such as Gujratis, Saraswats etc. and business organizations such as Toyota, United Way etc. that are driving performance excellence in order to satisfy their stakeholder's needs. In these organizations excellence begins with the mindset starting at the top leadership and shared by all. These organizations embrace change and imagine a different future that sets them apart from their competitors or rivals in the world. These organizations develop and implement strategies, processes, systems and best practices that create a culture of excellence that keeps all people in the organization involved, informed and enthused to be the best in their business, industries and communities.

## PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

In the United States the U.S Department of Commerce has developed Performance Excellence Criteria to drive organizational excellence. The Baldrige Criteria promotes the development and recognition of high performing, high integrity and ethical organization in business, education, health care, not-for-profit and government. The goals of Baldrige Program is:

- to deliver ever-improving value to stakeholders such as KOA and IAKF members and constituents contributing to organizational sustainability and growth.
- improvements in overall organizational effectiveness and capabilities. This includes standardization of processes and systems and their never ending improvement.
- organizational and personal learning. Learning from successes and failures as well benchmarking with other world class organizations.

The following lists the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence:

- Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Customer and Market Focus
- Measurement Analysis and Knowledge Management
- Human Resources Focus
- Process Management
- Business Results

By assessing actual performance with respect to the Criteria, organizations can get good feedback regarding their strengths and areas for improvement. By working on areas of improvement, organizations can drive excellence in their core competencies to satisfy their stakeholders needs and expectations.

## RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

One of the defining features of excellent organizations is their ability to engage, empower, enable and involve their people through TEAMWORK. Toyota has developed

a culture which is non blaming and non judgmental. Decisions are based on facts and consensus. Employees are trained in problem solving and decision making tools and are expected to drive continuous improvement in every thing they do. Google involves its engineers in brainstorming sessions to come up with innovative ideas for new products making it one of the most innovative companies in the world. There is a grocery store called Whole Food Market which uses its people in small teams to manage all aspects of its business. This approach has been so successful that Whole Food market has been growing for the last 25 years into a highly profitable 181 store chain with more than \$3.8 billion annual sales.

## ATTRACTING AND MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS

Many non-profit organizations are staffed by volunteers who unlike for-profit businesses such as, Toyota, Google and Whole Food Market employees donate their time free. They are motivated by a different set of criteria rather than making money which they do in their day job. These people are highly confident, successful people who trust each other. They are courteous, kind and honest in dealing with each other. These volunteers are passionate about the mission of their organization. They enjoy the camaraderie and teamwork associated with working with people who share in the same mission. They have a dream and they want to make a difference. In order for these volunteers to excel in their community service they need an organization that respects them, recognizes their time and efforts and shares in their vision and has a structure of governance that is ethical, fair and transparent.

The first step in attracting and motivating volunteers in any organization is to have a clear vision, mission, governance and systems to execute the mission. This includes an effective board, strategic planning, risk management, forging partnerships with other organizations, fund raising as well as attracting and motivating volunteers through reward, recognition and growth.

## SUCCESS FACTORS IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

To accomplish excellence in the community Service the highly effective volunteers nurture Win/Win relationships, practice principles of communication which are empathic and courteous. They practice creative cooperation and are willing to go the distance in achieving goals and objectives by blocking, tackling and running interference for each other.

I believe for volunteers to be effective and achieve excellence in their community service they should utilize as a minimum the following interpersonal skills:

- \* Trusting relationships
- \* Listening
- \* Open communication
- \* Teamwork and ability to work in teams
- \* Empowerment
- \* Consistent reward and recognition
- \* Training and education

- \* Ethics
- \* Diversity
- \* Risk taking.....a can do spirit., a sense of urgency
- \* Walk the talk

Regardless of individual beliefs, these soft skills instill passionate, positive and productive behaviors that are essential ingredients to drive excellence in our private or public life and make a difference through TEAMWORK. Everybody according to Tolstoy wants to change humanity-but nobody wants to change himself or herself. We should look for ways to compliment and recognize each others achievements and support each other. It serves no purpose for blaming each other for our difficulties.

There is an old tale with four characters: EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, ANYBODY, and NOBODY

It so happens that there was an important job to be done and EVERYBODY knew that SOMEBODY will do it.

ANYBODY could have done it but NOBODY did.

SOMEBODY got angry when he found out about it, because it should have been done by EVERYBODY.

The result was that EVERYBODY thought that ANYBODY would do it and NOBODY realized that SOMEBODY could NOT do it.

In the end, SOMEBODY reproached EVERYBODY because NOBODY did what could have been done by ANYBODY.

KOA and IAKF cannot become effective organizations and realize their respective visions and missions without TEAMWORK. We must be committed and excited about taking ownership and responsibility for keeping Kashmiri Pandit culture alive and getting back our homeland. To achieve these goals we also need a strong financial backing which could be realized by setting up a Kashmiri Pandit Foundation. This would be a tax exempt, not-for profit organization that would support activities to preserve and promote Kashmiri Pandit history (written and oral), culture ( paintings, books, music, religion etc) and spiritual ethos as well as provide help to the needy. This organization would also support selected KOA and IAKF projects in the U.S and India. Many Kashmiri Pandits could use donations to this organization as part of their estate planning as many of us are nearing retirement.

By leveraging our time, financial muscle and team work we Kashmiri Pandits would indeed ensure excellence in the communities we live, serve and thrive.