

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



How to Develop Resilient TIP Affiliates

Those who work in emergency services, healthcare and other human care services professions have become increasingly aware of how important it is not only to care for others but also to care for themselves. Many books have been written, seminars presented and programs established which all have the same message: **Take Care of Yourself!**

It's about time. I wholeheartedly support all of the efforts to help those who work in stressful jobs to develop resiliency.

But I do not think enough attention has been paid to what I call **Corporate Care**. Corporate Care is a set of principles which members of an organization practice to ensure the health and survival of the organization. The goal of corporate care is to develop resilient organizations (including TIP Affiliates) which can continue their missions long after their current individual members have come and gone. Many of our affiliates are proud of their resiliency... proud that they have provided services for 20+ years. However, we can't take our resilient TIP affiliates for granted. Unfortunately, over the years there have been TIP affiliates composed of committed TIP volunteers who were forced to close their doors. Why? Because their TIP leader(s) failed to care for the TIP organization.

What do TIP Leaders and TIP volunteers need to do to ensure the health and longevity of their TIP affiliates? What are **Corporate Care** "best practices?" What do resilient TIP affiliates do that those who have failed didn't do? Here are a few of the Corporate Care principles which I believe develop resiliency in organizations...

1. **MISSION FOCUS:** Organizations exist only to serve a mission. When organizations don't focus on their mission, they lose their way and eventually fail. Being mission focused means being client focused and continually asking: What can we do better to fulfill our mission? Are we providing quality service? Are we evaluating whether or not our clients value our service? Are the decisions we make in the best interest of our clients? Do we involve our clients in TIP activities and on our TIP boards? In other words are we an organization that is outward focused? Do we believe that **it's not about us**, and that **it's always about our clients!**?
2. **REPUTATION:** The survival of our affiliates depends on the contributions and involvement of many people in the community. Unfortunately, our supporters don't see the inner workings of our organization nor do they see the good work of volunteers do in the field. Community members become involved with TIP based on our reputation. This reputation is gradually

developed over time and is communicated by word of mouth. A positive reputation is developed when TIP leaders and members...

- Treat everyone with respect.
 - Are honest, genuine and transparent.
 - Take responsibility for mistakes and take corrective action.
 - Are serious about fulfilling the mission.
 - Provide quality services day in and day out.
 - Keep promises.
 - Develop positive relationships in the community.
 - Are enthusiastic ambassadors about the organization and its mission.
 - An affiliate's positive reputation enables it to grow, to raise funds, to attract volunteers and generally to survive and thrive.
3. **INNOVATION/HIGH STANDARDS:** TIP affiliates which survive over a long period of time are constantly improving, innovating, adapting and stretching. Affiliates which don't adapt, don't maintain high standards and don't strive for excellence in everything they do... Fail.
 4. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Leaders hold themselves and their employees accountable for achieving performance objectives tied to the health and growth of the Affiliate.
 5. **MANY OWNERS:** TIP Affiliates which survive have many "owners" i.e. many members who feel *"this is MY organization."* Resilient affiliates which survive are not *"one person shows."* They are places where there are many leaders. Members are encouraged to use their talents and resources for the benefit of the Affiliate.
 6. **SUCCESSION PLANNING:** TIP Affiliates who've had one leader who has all the key relationships and important operational knowledge usually close when that leader leaves the organization. There should always be a leadership team which can lead when (not if) the primary leader leaves. The primary leader/paid staff member should at any given time be able to answer the question: *"Who are you grooming for your position?"*
 7. **FIX PROBLEMS:** Problems are inevitable. A problem may be a "people problem" or a procedural problem. Little problems inevitably become big problems and can bring an affiliate down. Leaders need to fix problems or risk losing their volunteers and supporters.
 8. **PROTECT:** Within an affiliate's community there are people who want to help and those who want to hurt (compete, sue, steal, plagiarize, spread rumors...) TIP leaders/members should be on the lookout for those who want to hurt the organization and be prepared to vigorously defend it. Also, leaders should not take undue risks and should put every decision to this question *"What are the risks in going in this direction? Is this action we are about to take worth the risks?"*
 9. **MINDFULNESS:** TIP affiliates are part of a broader community. Within that community are valuable resources which TIP needs to survive and thrive. No organization is an island and members need to always be "looking out the window" for new relationships, opportunities and resources. Leaders need to communicate clearly what the Affiliate needs so that members can look for community resources to meet those needs.
 10. **MONEY:** Like any organization, it takes money to operate a TIP Affiliate on an ongoing basis. Affiliates need funding (ideally coming from user agencies) for many reasons but primarily to pay a staff person(s). Leading a TIP affiliate is a tough, time-consuming job. Expecting someone to do it on an all-volunteer basis doesn't work in the long run. Resilient TIP Affiliates have a consistent funding source(s) with funds designated to pay a staff person(s).

There are at least two challenges for TIP leaders in maintaining their corporate health...

1. Individual volunteers and clients within TIP affiliates are vocal, visible and demand attention. On the other hand, the “invisible organization” sits quietly in the background and can easily be forgotten.
2. The death of a TIP Affiliate because of lack of corporate care is usually a very slow gradual process that can go unnoticed for years. For that reason, leaders in TIP affiliates need to regularly assess their corporate health.
3. TIP Leaders should periodically assess their affiliate’s health at staff and board meetings by asking and answering the following 5 questions...
4. Are we keeping **clients** at the center of our decision making, and are we involving clients on our boards and in our programs and activities?
5. Are we **performing at a high level** as measured by our volunteer’s compliance with the volunteer contract, by our call volume and by our customer satisfaction surveys?
6. Are we continually developing **strong relationships** with our volunteers, community champions, funders and elected officials? And are we involving them in the organization?
7. Are we **involved in the community** we serve with our user agencies and other nonprofits so that we are aware of opportunities and the resources that exist?
8. Do we have a **deep leadership bench** and is someone(s) being groomed to become the primary leader when the current leader leaves?

In summary, TIP leaders need to care for individuals, volunteers, and staff within their affiliates. But leaders also need to care for the TIP corporation as a whole so that it is capable of serving future clients and volunteers.