

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



TIP: AN OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER

In her new book “These Precious Days” bestselling author Ann Patchett summarizes in one sentence the value of a local nonprofit organization in her life. She states that although she is not a “client” of the nonprofit, she benefits greatly by being involved as a speaker for them.

“I am the person this nonprofit is serving. Part of its mission is to give me the chance to experience the opportunity to respond directly to the broken and disenfranchised among us.”

In this one sentence Ms. Patchett summarizes what I have become increasingly appreciative of over the last couple of years... nonprofits like TIP are not only “service providers” but we are also “opportunity providers.” We exist not only to serve our clients but to benefit everyone involved with us by adding great meaning and value to their lives.

In the last couple of years, I have had 3 experiences which have increased my appreciation for TIP as an “opportunity provider.” ...

- The Donor Experience: For years my wife and I have wanted to help disadvantaged individuals attend college, but we didn’t know how to go about it. Recently we discovered a nonprofit whose mission aligned with ours... giving young people an opportunity, they would not normally have to go to college. What an opportunity this nonprofit has given my wife and I! For years they did the hard work of developing a system for identifying qualified students and for placing them in a college right for them. Yes, we write checks, but the nonprofit does the hard work of making it possible for us to contribute to the community in a way we have dreamed of.
- The Staff Experience: I have always felt that working for TIP is the greatest job going. Why? For years TIP staff (including me) have had the opportunity to work from home, work flexibly, do work that is meaningful, and receive lots of kudos along the way. These are all aspects of the work experience that today many workers are clamoring for. TIP workers have for years had the opportunity to work in a way that is now described as “the future of work.”
- The Pandemic Experience: Like many others the pandemic has cut me off from many of my connections with others. That experience left me aware of something I had taken for granted... the need for human connection. During this pandemic, a local nonprofit has given me the opportunity to connect with other community members.

Because of these experiences my appreciation for the tremendous value TIP brings ALL those involved with us has increased. We are “opportunity providers” ... a place which gives everyone involved a chance to make a big difference in the world by helping survivors of tragedy.

It's easy to take our value as “opportunity provider” for granted as we go about the formidable job of “service provider.” Therefore, I think that occasionally we need to take a step back and appreciate our valuable role as “a place to make a difference.” Then as leaders we need to communicate this “we have an opportunity for you!” message to our constituents and to our “would be” constituents. In that spirit, I would encourage all TIP leaders to ask themselves...

- Do I approach the agencies we serve with an attitude of *“We offer you a great opportunity to help you and your residents?”*
- Do I relate to our agency partners from a position of strength, recognizing the value TIP brings?
- In my pitch to donors, do I point out the great opportunity we are giving them? Or do I rely on the traditional approach: *“Please, please, please help us”*?
- In my volunteer recruiting efforts, do I emphasize the opportunity TIP volunteering provides, or do I communicate *“We really/desperately need you?”*
- Do I recruit prominent community members to the TIP board of directors, confident that TIP is a tremendous opportunity for them to serve, or do I accept anyone who is willing to join the board?

In short, we as TIP leaders are focused on our primary clients, survivors of tragedy. That's as it should be. But we should not lose sight of our “other clients” ... those who are involved in support roles or who are thinking about getting involved. We need to communicate to them what we know from experience... they will receive more than they give. They will receive something no other organization can provide...a unique opportunity to help others during the worst hours of their lives.

That's something... that's really something!