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Man-up or the Puppy Gets It ?**

**Charities shouldn’t get it in the neck for trying to employ modern marketing and fund-raising techniques but to operate in that space they must have the approriate skills and commitment of their staff.**

‘A message to Big Charity: stop grovelling and stand up for yourself’.

So began a recent article in the aftermath of ‘puppygate’ (you can read the full piece here <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/02/big-charity-stand-up-charities>) which reveals that the RSPCA researches the size of potential will donations. The author concludes that the charity industry is ‘in agonies’ over to how defend itself from criticism.

**Pulling Together**

Whilst simply telling Big Charity to ‘man-up’ might have been lifted straight from the Alan B’stard school of motivational speaking the thought of a room full of senior figures ‘agonising’ over what they stand for and how they should behave paints a familiar picture . Many organisations and sectors have long-suffered such acute internal tensions. For years the publishing sector played out it’s own soap-opera in the form of regular fisti-cuffs between editorial and sales over the soul of magazines. Unsurprisingly the financial imperative won the day. Likewise the arts sector continues to wrestle with the alignment of curatorial and commercial objectives. In that instance it would appear that continuous funding reductions are, if nothing else, serving as a foe that unites both functions. So, that the charity sector finds itself torn about how best to mount a defence of it’s methods shouldn’t come as that much of a surprise. Accepting that charity sector employees have their hearts in the right place and are generally committed to their respective causes it is still the case that fund-raising and operations don’t always sing from the same hymn-sheet. Whilst the need to fund-raise is inarguable, it and the marketing efforts that support it, are often seen as merely support services to the actual business of doing charitable work.

And so when difficult questions are asked it is perhaps not surprising that a joined-up response isn’t immediately forthcoming.

**Crossing the Line**

At this point we should declare that we make these observations because we’re lucky enough to work with clients in the charity sector as well as culture and publishing[insert sectors web-link].

So we’d be the first to recognise that there are good reasons why the charity sector finds itself in the position that it does. Firstly skills. Charities can’t all afford to pay top dollar (and The Daily Mail would be the first to complain if they did) and so it takes a lot of efort to attract the top talent. Secondly training – to meet those skills gaps is costly both in terms of the financial and the time investment required. The third reason is organisational culture. To the outside world the terms ‘working for a charity’ and ‘working charitably’ seem almost interchangaeable. And so when a charity operates ‘uncharitably’ it is percieved to crossed some kind of invisible moral line. Culture also plays a key role internally. Too may organisations assume or hope that their purpose and values can be assimilated by osmosis. The truth is that aligning employees behind what an organisation stands for takes thought, time and effort.

**One Voice**

The good news is that a little goes a long way. Notwithstanding that the charity sector already employs talented people (many of whom could probably earn significantly more in the commercial sector) it continues to bolster its ranks with senior figures and trustees from the comercial sector. They in turn have transferable skills and experience in managing cultural change.

And like the author of the title piece, we agree that charities are entitled, if not beholden, to act in a business-like manner. But to do so they need the appropriate training and relevant skills. When they’ve acquired both they also require cultural and organisational alignment to ensure that employees understand, believe and commit to this approach .

Only then will they be able articulate to the outside world with one voice why it is that they must behave exactly like their commercial contemporaries in order to succeed.

*If you’d like to learn more about our approach to organisational alignment and training click here [insert organisational alignment and training links] or visit our website [insert link].*