

NCCNP Session Summary: Lived Experiences Bring Life to Your Mission

Thursday November 4, 2022 2:30-4:00pm

- Panelists: Chris Budnick, Executive Director, Healing Transitions; Yvette Holmes, CEO, Southeast Raleigh Promise; Jennifer Player, President and CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Orange County; and Ron Pringle, President and CEO, Inter-Faith Food Shuttle
- Moderators: Carolyn Rhodes, moss+ross Senior Associate, Jeanne Murray, moss+ross Senior Associate

Panelists shared how incorporating lived experiences can strengthen how a nonprofit delivers on its mission. Session participants learned how embracing staff, volunteers, and board members with lived experiences helps to build inclusion, advance equity, and strengthen the impact of the nonprofit's mission. Panelists shared specific stories and examples showcasing best practices in Human Resources and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Session attendees asked questions and shared their own experiences, helping all present to see and hear first-hand the value of incorporating lived experiences to better connect with clients, volunteers, and each other.

moss+ross Senior Associate Carolyn Rhodes' post-session reflections are as follows:

- As a Black woman gaining momentum in the non-profit sector, I used to begin every new interaction with my lived/living experiences. It was something I felt like I had to do in order to be connected to mission-driven work. I have grown to understand that my lived/living experiences do not have to be my identity and only need to be shared as I chose to disclose them. My lived/living experiences can help organizations see or do things differently in the communities they serve but it is my skills and experiences that will help make long-lasting change in the organization. I believe you need both.
- Three takeaways:
 - **Create a culture where strategy is a part of every decision you make.** The best gift an organization can give to their Board, volunteers, donors, and staff is a strategic plan. My grandmother used to utter these words daily to me as a child, "Write the vision, make it plain." If it is not written down, it is hard to know where you are going. And it is hard for people to follow you.
 - **Create a culture of authenticity.** Every person wants to be seen, valued, heard, and represented. This can only happen if people are authentic. Giving people the freedom to express themselves about who they are and what they want for themselves can improve the culture and bring life to the organization's mission effortlessly.
 - **Create a culture of philanthropy.** Generosity is not only dollars and cents but is when leaders begin to see everyone as a part of the organization, regardless of title and status, and everyone gets onboard. Breaking down those barriers can cause real change to happen and impactful work to begin.

- There is no one size fits all approach to this work. And what works for one organization or person will not work for another. But the key is to start somewhere! Start small and make progress along the way. Ask for help because we are all on this journey, personally and professionally. And we can go only UP from here if we work together and learn from each other respectfully.