



How to Lead Nonprofits: Turning Purpose into Impact

Fireside Chat

Thursday, 5th December 2024

9:30 am to 11:30 am

Dubai, UAE

The Pearl Initiative hosted a fireside chat with Nick Grono, CEO of the Freedom Fund, and Maysa Jalbout, Philanthropy and International Development Leader, aimed at empowering next-generation leaders with the knowledge and tools to promote good governance within nonprofit organisations, fostering greater transparency, accountability, and strategic management setting the stage for a new era of organisational excellence in the nonprofit space.

This event also featured Nick's new book, *How to Lead Nonprofits: Turning Purpose into Impact to Change the World*. As the founder of the Freedom Fund and an influential voice in social impact, Nick shared invaluable insights into building and sustaining purpose-driven organisations that are designed to effect measurable change. The conversation also addressed the importance and challenges of effective leadership in Nonprofits and shared insights into the book's central themes, such as reimagining leadership within mission-centred organisations, navigating the unique challenges of the nonprofit landscape, and driving meaningful, lasting impact. Attendees got a unique opportunity to engage deeply with these concepts and gain practical guidance on transforming purpose into action.

Key Takeaways from the Fireside Chat:

- **Difference between nonprofit leadership and for-profit leadership:** In for-profit organisations, it is easier to assess a leader's performance based on the financial performance/ fiscal impact of the leader; on the other hand, impact measurement in nonprofits is harder to quantify, therefore there isn't a direct way to assess a non-profit leader's performance.
- **Challenges in Nonprofit leadership:**
 - Fundraising: Securing consistent funding remains a top challenge.
 - Dealing with Boards: Managing board relationships and aligning on priorities.
 - Managing Passionate Staff: Balancing enthusiasm with practical needs.
 - Mission Drift: Ensuring discipline in staying true to the nonprofit's mission amidst competing pressures.
- **Expectations and Pressures:** Nonprofit leaders are expected to exemplify the 'perfect leader' image. More often than not, nonprofit leaders are expected to walk the talk and present a perfect case on topics such as DEI. Additionally, increased socio-economic changes have led



to rising expectations from partners, communities, funders, and boards.

- **Leadership Development strategies in non-profits:** A call to action for philanthropists to invest more in nonprofit leadership development as often overhead expenses such as investments in training staff and building a strong finance team are judged as unnecessary expenses taking away from the mission of the organisations in nonprofits.
- **DEI in non-profits:** Nonprofits are expected to exemplify DEI, with leadership and boards ideally reflecting their target audience. Leaders must also cultivate an organisational culture of psychological safety and empowerment.
- **Leadership Qualities and Approaches:**
 - Confidence paired with humility: Leaders should admit when they don't know something.
 - Coaching mindset: Leaders should act as coaches, surrounding themselves with smart people and learning from them.
 - Creating the right culture: Leadership involves ensuring alignment with values and empowering staff.
 - Charismatic leadership can sometimes harm nonprofits if leaders prioritize personal branding over beneficiary needs.
- **The Role of Purpose, People, and Partnerships**
 - Purpose: Stay focused on the organizational mission despite funder-driven demands.
 - People: Address the lack of investment in staff and technology to enhance organizational capacity.
 - Partnerships: Build strong collaborations to amplify impact.