



# The Deep Capacity Non-Profit

Re-Thinking Impact  
thru a Capacity-  
Building Lens



Russell W. West, Ph.D.



# Deep Capacity When Your Mission Demands You Go Deeper

## DEEPENING STRATEGIC IMPACT | A CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACH

### The Decision to Go Deeper

After you've tried enough conventional wisdom and superficial half-fixes eventually it sinks in: there no substitute for going deeper. Most strategic plans promise a pathway to a desirable future. Achieving it's goals is like arriving at a longed-for destination. But is this what usually happens?

Research on strategic planning paints a different picture. Experts estimate that 70% of strategic planning efforts are never implemented, proceed as intended or fail to meet realize stated objectives.

The reasons are not surprising. In most every case:

- Capacity demands did not match of the requirements of new strategies.
- New ideas broke old systems, run by the old crew, the old way.
- Strategies depended on change methods that usually work well for first order, technical, policy-mandated change (but are futile in the face of systemic, cultural changes....especially belief systems of each stakeholder.
- A bias for "fixing" over a mindset that identifies resistance, comfort zones and integrity-focused initiatives. Sources: Strategy Safari, Mitzenberg, Failcon.

When strategic plans are crafted and adopted, without regard for the capacity of execution system responsible to achieve their aims, the weak results are predictable.

### Destination Plans Aren't the Issue

Strategic planning is blamed for the faulty focus of strategic planners. Having a destination in mind is a good idea for most any kind of planning. However, what if you could get a better result by changing the destination? Depth as a destination. What if your capacity was a more reliable predictor of your success than a vague notion of the future?

### Capacity Building |

A capacity focus begins with a Strategy Core conversation about the shape the organization must take to deliver its promise in the future. A strategy team, called the Strategy Core, sponsors a stakeholder review process, from which a strategy design emerges, focused on building key capacities.

## THE STRATEGY CORE | TAKING STOCK BEFORE YOU PLAN

### The Strategy Core |

Strategies are seldom more effective than the execution system upon which they must rely for success. Taking stock with this team, is the first step in in *Deep Capacity Strategic Planning*.

The Strategy Core consists of the alignments between the **Board**, **Executive(s)** and **Staff** that results in the fulfillment of the mission.

- The **Board** sets missional intent through its policy-informing aspirations, authorizations and actions. It authorizes, oversees and evaluates progress and impact of the strategy and the executive(s).
- The **Executive(s)** translate the board's policy mandates into aligned, actionable and accountable fulfillment system, consistent with vision and values.
- The **Staff** implements, executes and evaluates direct impact, while producing outputs, measuring outcomes and gathering feedback.

### THE STRATEGY CORE



The Strategy Core (pictured above) are the primary conversation partners in the design and implementation of a strategic plan.





# Non-Profits Deliver a Promise.

## Promises, Not Visions

A Transformative Promise is possible when an intentional fulfillment system translates action plans deeply informed by its most voiceless stakeholders.

- During the Pandemic, a period marked by isolation and social distancing, the social fabric-keeping importance the non-profit sector increased in visibility and philanthropic participation.
- More than \$484.85 billion, (a 4% increase from the records-breaking pandemic year of 2020), was spent on charitable efforts in the United States.\*
- More than 1.5 million non-profits are registered in the US. 10 million NGOs worldwide.
- This public trust arises from an expectation that promises made by social good outfits — to constituents, beneficiaries, clients society's social good — will be promises kept.



\*Giving USA 2022: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2021





## Non Profits Tap Something Deep Within.

LOVE.

Compassion  
Perseverance  
Generosity  
Community  
Hospitality  
Solidarity  
Dignity  
Justice  
Effort  
Faith  
Care

- Strategic plans often focus on a forecast into future scenarios. The plan serves as a roadmap to conquest, a flag to be captured, a vision of winning.
- But, winning implies losing too. This win/lose mindset can impact workplace culture.
- What if transformation requirements preceded strategy forecast exercises?
- What if readiness, adequacy, completeness, clarity were put to the test through evaluation?
- What would a whole-system participation in planning?

Your success lies in asking everyone for the success and stress stories of the people who touch or are touched by your system.

Listening precedes good leading.

- Seldom do organizations ask: Is this making a difference? If so, how do we know? What are the transformational requirements of ourselves? How do we instill these requirements into our strategic intentions, our fulfillment systems?
- Do our strategies ask anything differently from us? Are we transformed by our transformational strategies?

My bias: Most social impacts organizations begin with a deep story that measures them perennially. Not every strategy session can capture the orienting power of original convictions. Those who participate in the transformation fulfillment system, add weight to the messages of that system when their deepest presence, practice and performance is invited, where their stories may unfold.





# A Deep Promise Requires a Deep Capacity.

## Short on Capacity? Promises Hang in Balance

Transformational Results Come from Transformational Practices.

### CAPACITY DRAINS

- Drift, Passivity, Inertia, Entropy
- Anxiety-Prone Work Place
- High Anxiety, Conflicted Teams
- Talent/Culture Mis-Fits
- The Amateur Standard
- Low Accountability
- Theft, Work Avoidance

While many non-profits promise and deliver stakeholders — beneficiaries, donors, staff — a transformation, many more struggle to get all the pieces working together. As a result, flawed systems produce flawed results. Promises made, can at times go unkept. Best intentions evaporate into disappointing outcomes. Heroic efforts produce little observable change. Spiritualizing, rationalizing and apologizing tend to be the subtext to disappointing annual reports.



# A Capacity Building Approach

Strategic planning begins by establishing “Situational Awareness” to account for where you are compared to the change you want to realize through your efforts. A serious strategy will be realistic about your current capacity and the requirements to bring about the changes that matter most to your mission and its stakeholders. This strategic planning process deepens five fundamental capacities: **Stakeholders, Programs, Alignment, Capital** and **Evaluation**.

## Your Promise Fulfillment System

## 5 Capacities | S.P.A.C.E.

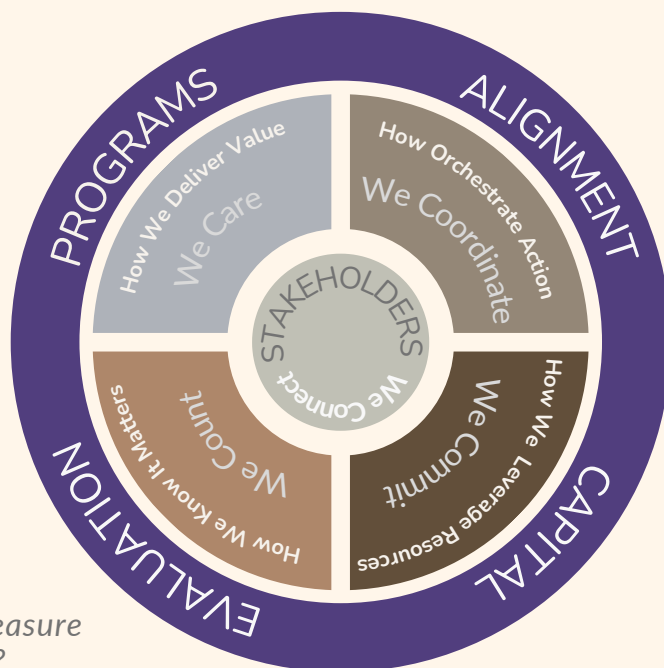
**Stakeholders** - *How do our stakeholders define success for themselves, and how is this reflected in our programs and services?*

**Programs** - *How do we deliver the value we expect of ourselves, in the manner our theory of change requires of us?*

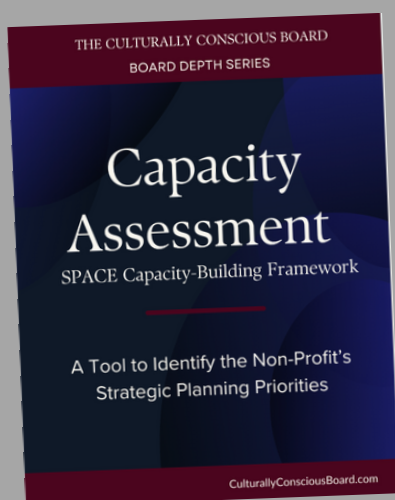
**Alignment** - *How do we sequence the activities to achieve the transformation you expect from your programs and services?*

**Capital** - *What commitments must we make or secure to leverage the resources needed to deliver our programs and services?*

**Evaluation** - *What learning must we collect, and measure to know how our efforts have mattered as intended?*

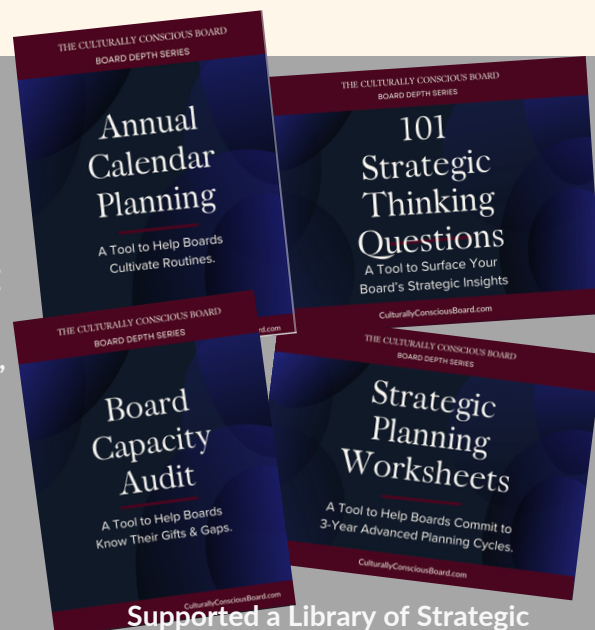


Keeping the five capacities - SPACE - that make up your promise fulfillment system at the center of the four stage strategy design process - **Aspire, Assess, Agree and Assign** - your strategy team takes stock of your past progress, your current realities and your preferred future. Each stage concentrates on specific initiative necessary to be successful in your program delivery. Your team will have a roadmap and resources for executing a plan equal to your capacity.



### Take the Capacity Assessment

We have prepared a 50-question assessment to help non-profit leaders determine how well their organization is addressing the five capacities in the SPACE Framework. There are no right nor wrong answers. Instead, this tool can help a board, executive or staff team to think through areas which need intensive strategic attention. This tool is recommended as a preparatory step when an organization is preparing for the strategic review or strategic planning process.

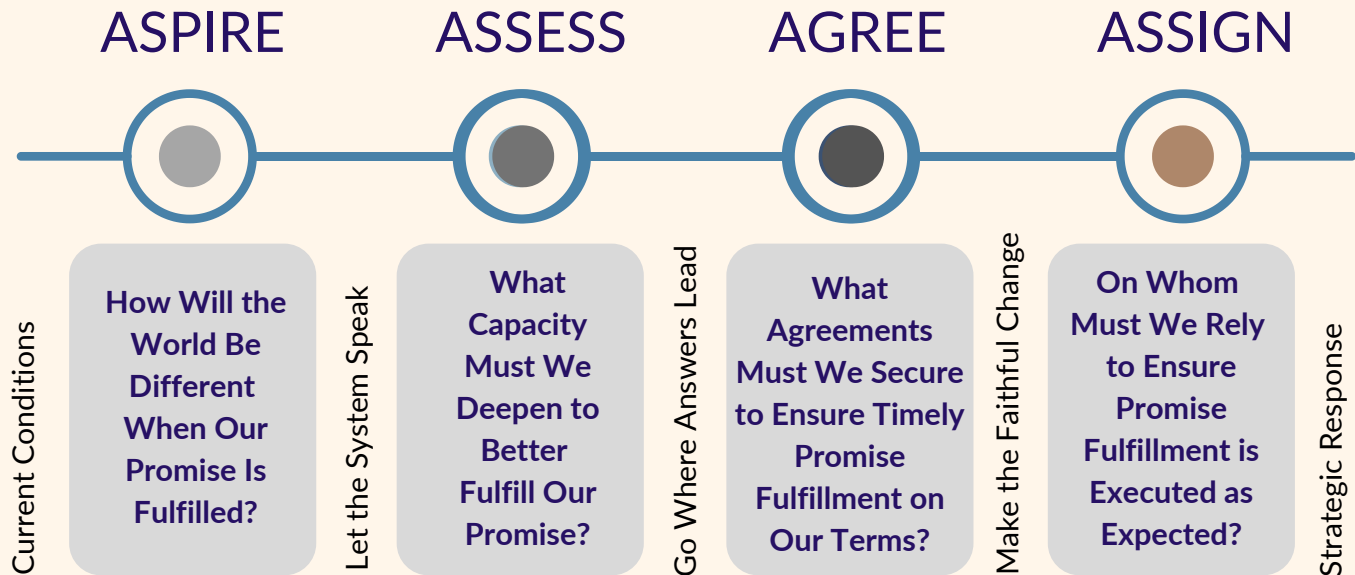


**Supported a Library of Strategic Planning & Board Training Resources.**



# The Strategy Design Process

The strategy design need not be a mysterious, drawn-out process. While every organization has its own complexities, the plan must be simple enough for everyone to understand what is required, why and how to complete it. The process is organized around four tasks that make up the capacity planning process. These are: **Aspire**, **Assess**, **Agree** and **Assign**. The process items for each task are illustrated below.



## Aspire

Exercises: Base+Advance

- Positive Progress List
- Impact Fulfillment Map (Outcomes Logic Model)
- Impact Wishlist

## Assess

Exercises: Capacity Audit

- Strategic Questions
- Stakeholder Empathy Map
- Gap Analysis: PESTLE/SWOT
- SWAG Budget: Resource Wishlist

## Assign

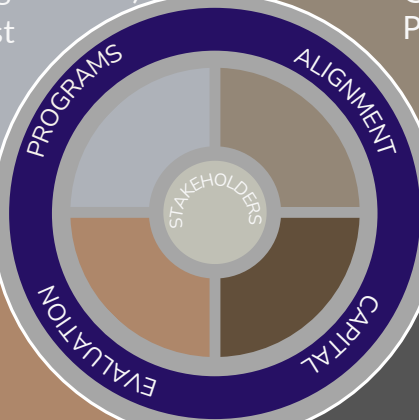
Exercises:  
The Champions

- Strategy Owners, One Per Strategy
- Strategy Core Workplans
- Accountability Calendar

## Agree

Exercises:  
The Committals

- Strategic Priorities
- Strategic Initiatives
- Strategic Timelines
- Strategic Mandates



## What is a Strategy?

*A strategy is an agreement management process that ensures a timely promise fulfillment process aligns between opportunity and intended impact, in spite of uncertainties and obstacles.*



# 1

## SPACE | Stakeholding



### Focus | All the People

- To achieve consistent messaging and a shared vision across all channels, intentional coordination and communication are critical. Clarity, cohesion, and culture are intentional design agreements that should not be left to chance.
- Establishing clear communication channels, such as providing regular updates and feedback mechanisms, is essential for stakeholders to have a voice and express concerns.
- In summary, effective stakeholder management is crucial for building a successful and sustainable organization. By prioritizing stakeholder management, embracing innovative approaches, and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability, boards can create long-term value for their organizations and service communities.

**Stakeholders**  
*How do our stakeholders define success for themselves, and how is this reflected in our programs and services?*



# 2

## SPACE | Programs



### Focus | A Promise to Keep

#### Programs

How do we deliver the value we expect of ourselves, in the manner our theory of change requires of us?

- Non-profit board members play an essential role in ensuring their organization's programs are successful. A successful program is the measure of a successful mission, a successful fulfillment system, and this includes the work of the entire strategy core - board, executives and program teams.
- They must have a thorough understanding of the organization's mission, assess program effectiveness, measure impact, ensure sustainability, comply with legal and regulatory requirements, engage stakeholders, manage risks, and embrace continuous learning and adaptation. By doing so, they can provide strategic guidance, ensure accountability, and steer the organization towards fulfilling its mission and creating a positive impact in the community.



# 3

## SPACE | Alignment



### Focus | Everything in Its Place

- Effective governance is essential for boards to ensure efficient operations and alignment with the organization's mission. This involves overseeing policies, strategic alignment, risk management, performance evaluation, and ethical conduct.
- Accountability is another vital aspect of governance. Boards must hold themselves and leadership accountable for actions and decisions, set clear expectations, monitor progress, and take corrective action when necessary. Ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, and ethical standards is critical for succeeding in today's complex business environment. Boards that prioritize transparency and accountability foster a positive organizational culture.

**Alignment**  
*How do we sequence the activities to achieve the transformation you expect from your programs and services?*



# 4

## SPACE | Capital



### Focus | Can We Afford Not To?

#### Capital What

*commitments  
must we make or  
secure to leverage  
the resources  
needed to deliver  
our programs and  
services?*

- Boards of directors must have a strong understanding of the types and structures of capital that their organization has access to. This includes both financial and non-financial resources that can support the organization's goals and objectives.
- In addition, boards must evaluate the risks and potential returns associated with different capital investments. This includes assessing the financial performance of the organization and identifying areas where improvements can be made. By maximizing capital efficiency, boards can help to ensure that the organization can achieve its goals while minimizing unnecessary costs and expenses.
- Finally, boards must oversee risk management and allocation decisions to ensure that the organization is well-positioned to weather any potential challenges or setbacks. This involves monitoring potential risks and working with management to develop strategies to mitigate them. By taking a proactive approach to risk management, boards can help to ensure the long-term sustainability and success of the organization.

# 5

## SPACE | Evaluation



### Focus | From Intention to Impact

- Boards need to understand evaluation processes and practices to assess organizational performance and effectiveness. This involves recognizing the purpose of evaluation, understanding evaluation frameworks and methodologies, and being aware of key metrics and indicators. Boards should also understand data collection and analysis, performance monitoring, external evaluation and audits, continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement, and ethical considerations.
- By prioritizing evaluation and investing in the necessary resources and support, boards can not only assess organizational performance and effectiveness but also drive ongoing improvement and ensure accountability to stakeholders. Ultimately, a strong commitment to evaluation can help organizations achieve their goals and fulfill their mission in a more effective and efficient manner.

**Evaluation**  
*What learning must we collect, and measure to know how our efforts have mattered as intended?*



# Asking Appreciatively | Mapping the Assets

Few things are as debilitating as the inability to get results. Disappointments, delays, excuses, and even hiring and firing doesn't seem to change things. This is costing you a lot of cash, time and energy.

This is not how you want to lead, nor live. You know there is a better way to work.

We go beyond the gaps, and seeking to understand what's beneath the result. We take an approach to diagnostics that affirms the assets and strengths in your situation, while making the gaps evident and actionable. This approach is called "Appreciative Curiosity."

Dr. West brings 35 years of organizational research design to bear when he shapes the discovery phase of your engagement. We will select the right questions, and the most fitting process the shape the intervention that most advances your performance and results. This is central to our Capacity Building approach.

PAIN



## Discovering, Defining

We co-create a learning partnership through a series of 720° leader and organizational fitness diagnostics: interviews, focus groups, surveys and assessments.



## Dreaming, Deciding

An emergence gap shapes the initial coaching focus. As performance is reshaped to maximize capacity alignment against capacity drains, clients gain 360° confidence, and credibility feedback from performance group.



## Designing, Delivering

Because this need to make a difference you can see, our team facilitates and measures agreed-upon optimal emergence factors, with a commitment to delivered measurable return on your coaching consulting investment.

MATURITY

A Capacity Building Approach to Change



# Non-Profits Are Deep.

## A Transformational Strategy, Not Just Strategic Planning

Few endeavors will be more rewarding than those taken up by non-profit and other social impact leaders. In the face of daunting odds, resource and team shortfalls, most non-profits press onward and inward. This is depth. This is a dimension of capacity that is worthy of the cause they have taken up.



## First Step: Let the System Speak

### Capacity Assessment, Then Strategic Planning

- **Stakeholding**
- **Programming**
- **Aligning**
- **Capitalizing**
- **Evaluating**

- Most non-profits promise and deliver stakeholders — beneficiaries, donors, staff — a transformation,
- Msny, however, struggle to get all the pieces working together— right program, people, purse and performance, along multiple bottom lines.
- As a result, flawed systems produce flawed results. Promises made at times go unkept. Best intentions evaporate into disappointments. Heroic efforts produce little observable change. Spiritualizing, rationalizing and apologizing accompany disappointing annual reports.



Deep Promises  
Invite Deep Systems



\*Capacity = "SPACE"

## Step 1 | Let the System Speak

**Principle: Strategy Can't Outpace a Flawed Fulfillment System.**

- Most non-profits promise to deliver to stakeholders — board, beneficiaries, donors, staff — a transformation,
- Many, however, struggle to get all the pieces working together— right program, people, purse and performance, along multiple bottom lines.
- As a result, flawed systems produce flawed results. Promises made at times go unkept. Best intentions evaporate into disappointments. Heroic efforts produce little observable change. Spiritualizing, rationalizing and apologizing accompany disappointing annual reports.

### 5 Capacities (SPACE)

- **Stakeholding**
- **Programming**
- **Aligning**
- **Capitalizing**
- **Evaluating**



# Deep Promises Invite Deep Systems



## Situational Awareness

Situational awareness for organizations is understanding their surroundings, both internally and externally, to make informed decisions. It matters because it enables adaptability, strategic planning, and effective responses to changes, ensuring the organization remains dynamic and well-equipped to navigate challenges.

## 2nd Step | Go Where Answers Lead

**Principle: Address Gaps in the Fulfillment System.**

- **Stakeholding**
- **Programming**
- **Aligning**
- **Capitalizing**
- **Evaluating**

- As mentioned, the system speaks. Developing the capacity to hear it requires readiness to act on what you learn.
- The gaps must be addressed. Your team cannot out-think a flawed process. Eventually, the system's ordinary dashboard and dials will not be necessary.
- The average person will experience it through your culture, then your results.
- Addressing the gaps in your fulfillment system puts the organization back into a position of winning. The culture, the engagement follows in a healthy, winning environment.





# Deep Promises Invite Deep Systems



## Strategic Planning with Depth

### Strategic Planning & the Strategy Core.

- The number one reason strategic planning fails: flawed implementation systems. When all the stakeholders shape the planning process, with a design to achieve each part of the strategy core's interests, highly resilient plans emerge.
- When teams plan together— board, executive and program leadership teams — their strategies are more likely to succeed.

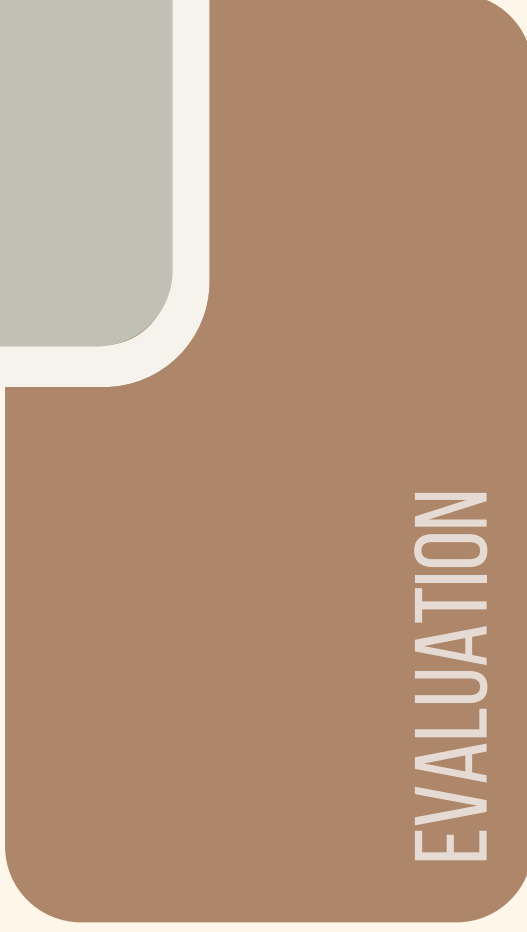
## Step 3 | Make the Faithful Change

**Principle: Promise Only What You Can Deliver.**

- **Stakeholding**
- **Programming**
- **Aligning**
- **Capitalizing**
- **Evaluating**

- Most non-profits promise and deliver stakeholders — beneficiaries, donors, staff — a transformation,
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# Strategic Canvas | SPACE Worksheet



- 1 - Take the capacity assessment for non-profits
- 2 - identify strategic priorities based on “green,” “Yellow,” “Red” scores. List Above for Discussions.

- 3 - Commit to a team-based discussion with internal/external stakeholders and coaches.
- 4 - Explore Solutions, costs & team members needed to improve each strategic priority.





# Russell W. West, Ph.D.

Described by many of his clients as “thought provoking,” “inventive,” and even “wizardly,” Russell is an executive coach, business professor of leadership, organizational consultant, humanitarian and author. With more than 25 years in military, higher education, non-profit,



university teaching and consulting work, West brings keen analytic and executive mentoring skills to the task of organizational change leadership.

He is especially skillful in helping groups realize dreams with their existing levels of resource.

Executives who work with him comment on the tireless innovation he generates that turns strategic

insights into traction, and traction into profit in many forms. Friends who know him are often surprised to learn he is a former drill instructor for U.S. Marine officer candidates, at least until they see him coach excellence into existence where little might have existed before. West will use his knowledge of organizational and leadership fitness to get your team moving beyond status quo, overcoming systemic impairments, and executing toward measurable results. And he'll do so with humor, passion, and professionalism.

**On Method:** West is a communication scholar, organizational analyst and leadership developer. In each of these applications, one neutral assumption may explain his method more than any: ***that things are almost never as they appear to be.*** This assumption informs West's natural disposition toward situational, team and system observation and analysis.

In the discovery phase of an engagement, he is likely to ***ask lots, listen long and delay replies*** until he grasps your circumstance. You'll know when he has it: from that place of empathy, he will bring to bear organizational intelligence that makes your own situation even more concrete and mentionable. (He also understands, that if you have called him, it is likely, things have not been at their best for some time. He'll get right to work, mostly conducting interviews, collecting data and observations. He will prioritize intervention designs that may bear the most relief as quickly as your system dynamics allow – but not one second sooner. Yet, he will let “the system's wisdom” guide the shape, approach and pace of intervention. He'll generate curiosities about how your business or optimized to remove blockages and increase flows. West consistently relies on key experts in conversations, program design and facilitation. He does so in a way that doesn't sound like teaching, but as validation you are going through something that others have survived before you (and lived to theorize about it!). That's what the best scholarship is -- lessons humbly learned.

*While You're  
Focused  
on Impact.*

**AN EXECUTIVE COACH  
IS FOCUSED ON YOU.**

## Non-Profit Services

- Decision Support Coaching
- C-Suite Effectiveness Accelerators
- Chair & Board Development
- Strategy Assessment & Planning
- Program Evaluation, Logic Modeling
- Executive Director & Chair Partnerships
- Executive Transition Support
- Leader Shift Retreats | Private or Teams
- Culture Confident Workplace (DEIJ)
- Culture Mapping | Culture Shift Process
- Feasibility Research | Donor-Focused ROI



Meet Russell W. West, Ph.D.  
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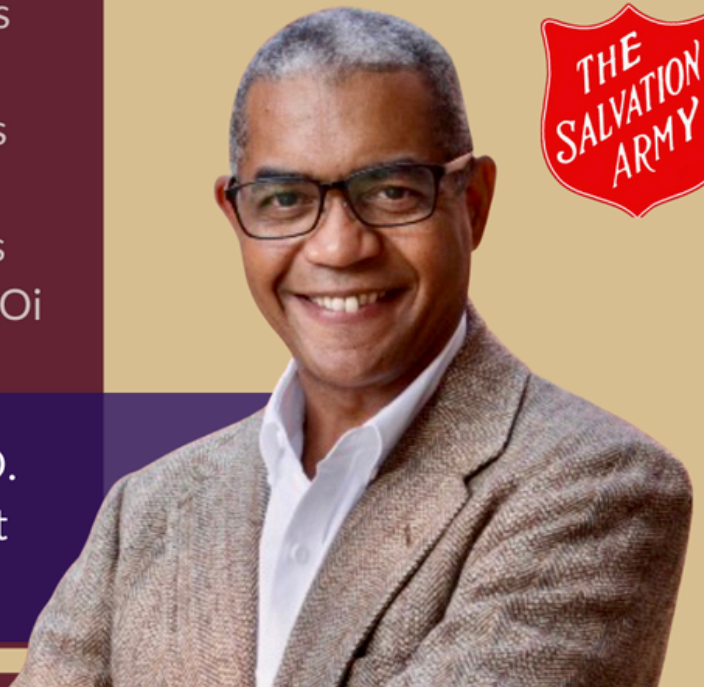
  
**Advent Health**



**LifePlus...**



**Candlelighters.**  
For Children With Cancer





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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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