

A Most Important Quality: The Ability to Ask for Help

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NBA Incubate Initiative Affiliate Ministry

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The NBA Incubate Initiative strives to encourage and support the development of new and innovative health and social service ministries and organizations by Disciples. These ministries, in turn, inform and inspire

fellow Disciples throughout our communities and across the life of the church.

Together, we expand the church's understanding of and capacity for health and social service ministry as part of Christ's work in the world. Dana Bainbridge, the author of this blog post, is a co-founder and the development officer of Recovery Café San Jose, one of our Incubate Partners. It is a healing community for those traumatized by addiction, homelessness, and mental health challenges.

When you step out in faith to start a non-profit, it's not long before you find out how much you don't know, and how many things you don't do well. Which is perfect.

So, in the early days of launching Recovery Café San Jose, we just got pretty good at one thing - **asking for advice and for help**. Of course, it also helps if you can get people truly excited about your mission. When we got those two things going, things got easier.

I leaned a lot on the Café's other co-founders, Sandra Hietala and Jim Thompson. Sandy is great at being out in the community and finding fabulous volunteers and resources for us. She found pro bono lawyers to do all our founding legal papers, and found all kinds of amazing volunteers. Jim has extensive experience in building a strong non-profit, and his advice helped us set a culture of dedicated fundraising in our Board.

Jim often shares his formula for finding the right Board members. When he talks about it, I often see people taking notes. It's now in the job description we share with people when we ask them to be on our Board. What I love about this, is that it gives us opportunities to share important conversations and stories when we talk about our emotional commitments.

$$I = EC + 4W$$

Impact (I) comes from being Emotionally Committed (EC) to the mission and success of RCSJ.

That Emotional Commitment is reflected in the 4 Ws:

1. **Work:** The RCSJ Board is one of its members' three top charitable activities and they devote time to work to help RCSJ succeed.
2. **Wisdom:** Board Members use their experience, skills, talents and wisdom to support, advise, guide and, when necessary, constructively challenge the RCSJ Executive Director to ensure the organization's success. Board Members are committed to remain aware that they hold in trust the stewardship of the mission and vision of the organization in their governing.
3. **Wealth:** In collaboration with the Executive Director, board members take responsibility for fundraising and the overall financial health of RCSJ. Each member works to make an annual Personal Impact of at least \$_____ (we agree on a goal all Board members will raise) per year to the organization.
4. **Witness:** Members share their passion for RCSJ with people in their networks and help connect RCSJ to a wide network of individuals, organizations and resources that can help achieve its mission.

Our Board members need to not only be good advisors, they needed to be good at asking others to help by giving money. Each Board member's Personal Impact goal is made by giving or by raising that money through their efforts and connections. We all work together to meet those goals.

Another sage piece of advice that's helped me a lot came from Killian Noe, founder of Recovery Café in Seattle, who learned along the way from her mentors, three reasons why it can be fine to invite people to give:

1. because they are free-thinking adults and can say "no".
2. because when we ask we are fine with whatever answer they give.
3. because giving creates a possibility of connection between the giver and the relief the gift gives, which can bring them all joy.*

At Recovery Café SJ, we still struggle at times to meet our goals and wonder if our financial needs will continue to be met as we grow. It is at this place of deep vulnerability that we have to ask others for help. The miracle is this - through asking we have met Board members, volunteers, and donors who have walked the precipice of addiction with their own children and family. These people most likely will have never attended our church. But they are some of the most generous givers to RCSJ because they profoundly know what it is to need a healing community like RCSJ. Being able to give brings them, and all of us, a sense of being truly connected to one another. So, we live in this irony that our need to humbly ask for help, leads to our greatest joy.

**From [Descent Into Love: How Recovery Café Came to Be](#) by K. Killian Noe*

The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.