

THE LEADERSHIP IN LEAVING:

REFLECTING ON YOUR READINESS

Interviews and surveys with long-term nonprofit leaders reveal the considerable tensions at play when making and carrying out the decision to leave an organization. At the center, the leader experiences both personal and organizational pressures. For example, a leader may feel that she is ready to give up the burden of caring and feeding the organization; at the same time, she worries that if she leaves the organization will not raise the money it needs to make it through the next several years. These forces make the decision to exit especially difficult. Leaders have to assess their organization's future needs, while at the same time grapple with personal questions, including what to do next and how leaving will change his or her identity.

PURPOSE OF THIS EXERCISE:

This tool will take you through a series of questions to help you explore the various forces at play in your own decision-making. It will help you identify where you might focus your energy to prepare at the organizational level, as well as a sense of how ready you are to let go on a personal level.

HOPED-FOR OUTCOMES:

- A quick gauge of your readiness for a leadership change
- An understanding of your feelings about how ready your organization is for a potential transition
- Identification of personal and organizational areas to focus on in order to prepare for a leadership shift.

Think of this tool as a starting point and as a basis for discussion. You may want to use it just for personal reflection, or you may want to share it with colleagues either within or outside of your organization. Additionally, if you keep a copy of your answers you can use them for comparison over the time as you answer these questions again and see how you're progressing.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Long-term leaders, especially founders, can find it hard to separate their personal life from their commitment toward their organization, making it even more difficult to read the signs that they might be ready to leave. The questions below will help you examine signals that you and the organization may be in a good place for you to be able to leave. They also can help surface your ideas and desires for the future.

On the next page, circle the level to which you agree with each statement. At the end, you will be able to add up your answers and analyze the results.

#1. I AM READY TO HAVE MORE TIME FOR MY OWN PROJECTS AND LIFE.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#2. IF I WERE TO LEAVE IN THE NEXT YEAR, MY BOARD OF DIRECTORS COULD CONDUCT A SEARCH AND FIND AN APPROPRIATE SUCCESSOR WITHOUT MY HELP.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#3. MY ORGANIZATION IS STABLE FINANCIALLY AND I BELIEVE THAT WILL CONTINUE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#4. I WANT TO LEAVE MY JOB IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#5. I HAVE IDEAS ABOUT WHAT I WOULD DO IF I WERE NOT IN THIS POSITION.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#6. MY BOARD AND I HAVE A PLAN AND A TIMEFRAME FOR MY LEAVING THIS POSITION.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#7. THE STAFF AND BOARD HAVE A CLEAR SENSE OF MISSION THAT GUIDES THE ORGANIZATION'S WORK.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#9. WE HAVE A STRONG AND COMMITTED STAFF THAT CAN HELP THE ORGANIZATION WEATHER CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#8. I HAVE ASSESSED WHAT IT WOULD MEAN FOR ME AND MY FAMILY IF I MADE LESS MONEY.

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

#10. I HAVE FAMILY/PERSONAL OBLIGATIONS THAT WOULD BE EASIER TO FILL IF I WERE NOT WORKING FULLTIME .

- 1 Totally Agree
- 2 Agree Somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Totally Disagree

Explain your response – more detail is better for discussion later:

REFLECTING ON YOUR READINESS

Worksheet

DATE FILLED IN: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Write in the number of your answer to each corresponding question in the boxes below.
 1 Totally Agree 2 Agree Somewhat 3 Disagree Somewhat 4 Totally Disagree
- Add up your totals for each side at the bottom of each column and use "What Does Your Score Mean?" below to interpret your response.

Q#	A#
1	
4	
5	
8	
10	

Q#	A#
2	
3	
6	
7	
9	

PERSONAL TOTAL: _____

ORGANIZATION TOTAL: _____



WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

PERSONAL

1-5: You are prepared to leave, good luck!

6-10: You are getting ready for a move out of this position.

11-15: If you are ready to leave, start to think about what is next for you.

16-20: You are still very involved with and committed to the job; leaving may be hard.

ORGANIZATION

1-5: Your organization seems prepared for your transition.

6-10: The organization is well on its way to being prepared.

11-15: It may be time to hire a consultant to help your organization prepare.

16-20: If you plan to leave, your transition may be difficult for your organization.



QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Worksheet, cont.

DATE FILLED IN: _____

LOOK AT THE "BALANCE BEAM":

- How balanced is it? Are you more personally ready to leave (lower number on personal side)? Is your organization more ready (lower number on organization side)?

- Is there personal work you need to do? Organizational work?

LOOK AT YOUR PERSONAL SCORE:

If your score is low, you may already be in transition or ready to begin. If it's high, you may be happy and settled in your current position:

- Did your score surprise you? Did it line up with your perception of where you are?

- Which areas do you need to focus on more if you want to prepare for a transition? (Questions that you answered with a 3-4)

LOOK AT YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SCORE:

If your score is low, your organization may already be prepared for your transition. If it's high, you may need to work with them if a transition is in the near future:

- Did the organizational score surprise you? Did it line up with your perception of where your organization is?

- Which areas does your organization need to focus on if they want to prepare for a transition? (Questions that you answered with a 3-4)

CHANGES SINCE YOU LAST USED THIS TOOL :

- What changes do I see from the last time I filled this in?

- What caused those changes?

- What are my goals moving forward?

- Where am I on my goals from last time?

