Sociocracy in non-profits

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Today

• Key concepts of sociocracy
• Application to non-profits
  • Organizational structure
  • Decision making
  • Feedback
• Examples
Overview

Gandhi: Social change

- Challenge program
- Constructive program
- Spiritual purification
Key concepts

decisions by those who work together

in service of the aim

aim in service of the mission
Our mission

Making resources for learning and implementing sociocracy accessible to everyone
Tools & principles

- Decision making by consent
- Organizational structure by linked circles
- Continuous evolution by feedback
- Effective
egalitarian

steering toward the aim...
1

Application to non-profits: organizational structure
Circle structure

Board

Management Team

Department
Department
Department
Circle structure

What is different?

- principle of subsidiarity - redistribution of authority from the top to the periphery
- circles are “double-linked”
- leaders and delegates are selected by consent
- more >>
Composition & role of the management team
Composition & role of the board

What’s different?

• Staff on board: ED and delegate
• Stakeholder representatives
Role of volunteers

- Treated as staff
- Participation in circles
- (Voice on Board from Volunteers Stakeholder Circle?)
2

Application to non-profits: decision making
Consent

- Majority vote
- Autocracy
- Consensus
- Consent

(A circle can consent to a different method of decision making.)
Rounds

Everyone speaks one by one
Meeting format

✓ reliable
✓ clear
✓ shared accountability
3

Feedback
Feedback

- Evaluating meetings
- Policy and role terms
- Selection process
- Circle feedback
- Role improvement feedback
- Workflow processes
Examples
Examples

Independent schools
Units of colleges
Permaculture associations
Social change/service organizations

More on our website sociocracyforall.org

Makers Mill    Global Awareness Local Action Community Center
PULSE          Partnership for Undergraduate Life Science Education
SoFA          Sociocracy For All
Generic

Circles are double-linked
Examples: Makers Mill

A Makerspace & Vocation Hub where people come together to cultivate and share a wide variety of crafts, skills, technologies, and arts for personal, professional, and community goals.
Examples:

**PULSE**

PULSE helps life sciences departments at all institutions of higher education align with national education reform initiatives so they can develop inclusive, student-centered, evidence-based teaching and learning in order to cultivate the development of scientists who reflect the diversity of American society.
Examples:

Sociocracy For All

Changing the way groups make decisions!
Making learning and implementing sociocracy accessible to everyone.
Legal Documentation

1. Articles of Incorporation (mostly defined by the IRS)
2. Bylaws
3. Policies & Procedures
   - No rules about what to put in each document.
   - If you are not explicit about governance, then tradition or basic government provided templates apply.
   - Each jurisdiction has its variations
1. Organization
2. Purpose
3. Sociocratic Governance
   ○ 3.x Definition: Sociocratic governance shall be defined as a method of governance that delegates policy making to all levels of the Corporation and establishes equivalence among its members within their domain of responsibility.
4. Governance Principles
   ○ 4.x Circles, consent, continuous evolution
5. Members
   ○ 5.x The basis of membership and the rights and responsibilities of membership shall be defined in the Policies and Procedures.
6. Board of Directors
   ○ 6.x Qualifications An understanding of, and agreement with, the mission, aims and governance principles of the Corporation as stated in these bylaws and the Policies & Procedures.
7. Meetings
   ○ 7.x Voting. Decisions of the Board are made following the principle of consent and the methods described in the Policies & Procedures.
8. Officers
9. etc
Sample Policies on Governance NGO USA

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J. Appealing a Circle Decision
K. Producing Minutes
L. Evaluating, amending, and reaffirming the governance agreement and practices

Appendix
1. Facilitation sheet
2. Organizational Structure
3. Table of Circle Aims & Domains
Closing
Board questions

• “Is the Mission Circle the same people as the board?"
  • Usually yes. If distinction is needed, use Committee of the Whole/Consent Agenda.

• “We have a working board. How does that fit?”
  • Board needs to consider how it manages both the long-term view of a Mission Circle and the day-to-day view of a Coordinating/General Circle
Board questions

- “Our board needs to use voting for decisions.”
  - Consider consent decision-making to be super-majority voting.
  - If the Board does not reach consent...
Board questions

• “What does the board decide, what does the General Circle and the circles decide?” (Can fiduciary responsibility be passed on?)
  • The Board has the traditional oversight responsibilities of a Board, but delegates decision-making and/or preparation of decision-making.
Challenges

• Sharing power (both directions)
• Cultural change
  • easier for new and small orgs
  • harder for larger, established orgs unless they really feel the pain
• Personal implications
  • transparency, vulnerability, the end of conflict avoidance
  • Requires communication skills (NVC, etc)
• Work around external environment
  • legal issues
  • norms of industry
How to get started

✓ Rounds
✓ Evaluations of decisions
✓ Delegation with authority
✓ Study group/shared experiences/training/change teams, etc.
✓ Contact SoFA for support in learning & implementing
Books

- *Many Voices One Song: Shared Power with Sociocracy* by Ted J. Rau and Jerry Koch-Gonzalez
- *Who Decides Who Decides?* by Ted J. Rau

The manual for starting new projects/organizations is available at [sociocracyforall.org](sociocracyforall.org).
### Training & coaching

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[sociocracyforall.org/coaching](sociocracyforall.org/coaching)

[sociocracyforall.org/training](sociocracyforall.org/training)
How to continue

✓ Organizational membership:
  making sure your implementation is sustainable long term
  ■ discount on training (for new members or as refreshers/deepening) and consulting
  ■ coaching as needed
  ■ communities of practice for peer support

More info sociocracyforall.org/sectors
Coming up

THU 10

June 10 @ 15:30 - 16:30 UTC

How can sociocracy be used in volunteer/staff teams?

Jupiter - SoFA Zoom Room

As sociocracy is finding more and more interest in nonprofits, a tricky tension needs to be explored more deeply: how do power relationships change if some people are in paid positions while others are volunteering? How can nonprofits give volunteers a voice while still honoring the effectiveness of the staff team?
Q & A