

# Housecalls at Work

## Answers from Dr. Insite

Dr. Insite is an ongoing column to address people-related issues in nonprofit organizations. For answers to your workplace issues, please e-mail your questions to [DrInsite@coreinsites.com](mailto:DrInsite@coreinsites.com). All responses will be handled confidentially.

BY SHEILA L. MARGOLIS  
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### DEAR DR. INSITE:

I have recently taken the position of executive director. Though I have been involved in this association as an active board member, taking the helm as the leader presents new challenges. The time has come in our organization's growth to step things up to a new level. What is the best way to move forward in my new position?

### DEAR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

As a new leader, you may be overwhelmed with opportunities to change the organization. Here are four simple rules to guide your actions.

**Rule #1: Reflect on what's sacred.** Take a period of time to observe the organization and develop a clear picture of the features that are core, distinctive and enduring to it. The identity of the organization – the most central aspect of its culture – has defined it over the years. The combination of the Purpose – the fundamental reason why the organization exists – and the Philosophy –

the distinctive character that is the personality of the organization – should be preserved unless you seek radical change. Remember, these attributes are what loyal members are connected to.

**Rule #2: Choose the right people for your team.** In addition to evaluating the culture of the organization, it is necessary to know the strengths of the people you have in your key positions. Without the right people on your team, you will have ongoing obstacles to achieving your goals.

**Rule #3: Let strategy be your guide.** After an observation period, direct your energies to creating a dynamic strategic plan. Work with your Board, management team and membership to define a vision and strategic goals to guide the organization. This process can have the added benefit of nurturing your relationship with the Board, as well as other groups. The strategy provides the path for achieving organizational success.

**Rule #4: Know that your actions become your message.** As the leader, you are the chief communicator for the organization. Be conscious of your words and actions because the message you deliver will be evaluated and used as the model for others. If your actions do not support the values that the organization deems important or the strategy that has been set, then your future and the future of the organization will be in question. ●

*Sheila L. Margolis and Ava S. Wilensky hold doctoral degrees in Human Resource Development. As the principals of CORE InSites® Inc., they are well-known organizational development experts specializing in organizational culture, strategy, the strategic use of human resources and program evaluation. Additionally, Margolis and Wilensky are part-time professors at Georgia State University and authors of There Is No Place Like Work: Seven Leadership Insights for Creating a Workplace to Call Home (2006). Call them at (404) 255-4007 or visit online at [www.coreinsites.com](http://www.coreinsites.com).*