

EVENT SUMMARY

Superpowers for your NGO: How to boost your strategy

A fireside chat with Okan McAllister, founder of the award-winning social enterprise @primemoversORG

organised by the AEV (Academy of Non-profit Associations) on 9.2.2021 5:30 p.m. CET, online



a conversation with:



Every organization should work on the basis of 3 variables = the 3 P's:

- **People** (Who are the right people for your organisation? What are you doing to create the right space for them to get the most out of their experience in your organisation? How do you make sure that you attract, select, onboard, retain the right people?),
- **Processes** (How you do things. Example: hiring & firing processes, file naming norms for your Google Drive, the project management tools you use, the template you use for your meeting notes, the place you keep all your ideas, anything from big to small, we have a lot of different processes),
- **Projects** (What you actually do as an organisation? How do you create impact? How successful are you in doing that?)

-> **All of these variables need to be addressed and somehow balanced.** These three variables are interdependent. If you don't get good in the People variable, your Processes will not be cared about, and your Projects won't work out. If your Projects don't work out, you cannot be an NGO that People want to be a part of. If you have the wrong Processes, you are using your resources ineffectively and not creating the right space for your team to become their best self, which will affect your Projects negatively etc. It takes time to find the perfect balance, which is when you start having a high-functioning organisation.

About the organizers:

The **Academy of Non-profit Associations (AEV, original: Akademie Ehrenamtlicher Vereine)** is a network of non-profit associations and creates synergies to promote exchange, further training and knowledge transfer between its member organizations. We regularly organise workshops, networking events and other formats bridging topics and organisations; a few of them are open to the public. We offer a platform to showcase the strengths of each association, exchange on challenges, be part of a community of engaged youth and simply help associations achieve the best possible impact through their work. The AEV is currently active in Austria with the aim of creating a Europe-wide network. Your organization is interested in the AEV? Then become a member and join our community (in German). For more information: <https://www.aev-akademie.org/>

About the speaker:

Okan McAllister is the founder of the award-winning social enterprise PRIME MOVERS (<https://www.theprimemovers.org>) as well as kindby (<https://www.kindby.com>), ONE DAY (<https://www.oneday.at>), and Mission Liftoff (<https://www.missionliftoff.com>) among others. He has spent the past seven years working in, co-founding (and failing) as well as capacity building for several impact organisations. He is passionate about making people believe in their abilities to shape the world, where systems thinking plays a crucial role.

Academie Ehrenamtlicher Vereine | ZVR: 1866434566

Adresse: Rosaliagasse 9, 1120 Wien | Kontakt: info@aev-akademie.org
Webseite: <https://www.aev-akademie.org/> | Fb/Instagram: @aev.akademie

Okan's main learnings about recurring challenges in impact organisations:

- **You first need to make a key decision.** The main one is: *Do I want to do this work in this association/NGO long-term or keep it as a side operation/project?* If it is a side project, not everything below might apply to you.
- **Get the right people.** It's not about the number of people. It's okay to let go of people. Not everyone needs to have a place in your organisation (*"pick the right seeds for the right soil"*). Try to answer the following questions: **(1) Whom do you want in your team?** **(2) Who does well in.[your organisation]..?** There is no point of having 20 volunteers for your NGO, if 15 of them are not contributing. People who are serious about their role, want to work with people who are serious about their role as well. **You cannot succeed in the People, Processes and Projects front, if you do not focus on People.** It is not "mean" to let volunteers go. "This is a complicated issue". Feel free to contact Okan for more details.
- **You need structure and prioritisation. Your job is** to focus on the right things, the right way.
- **Check that you have all the skills a successful organisation needs.** Skills that usually lack in impact organisations: facilitation (even of weekly meetings), being able to create the right space for discourse, creating the right culture for feedback.
- **Find focus.** Do what has impact, instead of what the founders think is a cool idea. The purpose/goal of an NGO is to have an impact (in society), not implementing ideas that founders find cool.
- **Focus your resources into what will stay long-term in many years.** How much of your decisions or activities bring something to your organisation in 3,5,10 years?
- **Ask yourself** (as a founder/core team member): ***In what ways are you standing in your own way*** (what skills are you lacking, what kind of mindset are you lacking...)?
- **Shift your mindset, try new things - give it all.** We often underestimate what is possible. Feedback cycles help to get data/see what works. Fail fast, learn faster.
- **"It's my fault"-mindset: Ask yourself "What did I do wrong?"** (helped to reflect when stuff wasn't working, people not fulfilling tasks, projects failing etc.). Eg onboarding could have been insufficient, different culture/motivation etc. -> dig to find out what happened -> what process/culture would be helpful/what should we change. **Exercise: Ask yourself WHY 5 times in a row.** Don't use this question as a way to beat yourself up, but to understand the core of why your organisation produces certain outcomes. For instance:
 - 1. **Why** did this volunteer not attend 5 Jour Fixes, and is not fulfilling any responsibilities?
 - Maybe he/she joined a year ago hoping to meet new people and inspiration and have an impact.
 - 2. **Why** were these expectations not fulfilled?
 - Maybe it was because the core team was not focused on creating the right space for people to connect, but focused on operations only.
 - 3. **Why** not? Why haven't we noticed for a whole year?
 - Maybe the members don't care enough about the organisation to give feedback. Maybe there is not the right mechanisms to collect feedback on an ongoing basis. Maybe they feel the core team wouldn't listen because there is no feedback culture.
- etc. etc. >>> **Well, how do we create all that?**

Okan's main learnings about recurring challenges in impact organisations (continued):

- **Show recognition for the work of your team members.** Often there's an issue of recognition, team not realizing e.g. how much work and what kind of work a leader is putting in.
- **Generally: make decisions that scale** (eg on HR -> getting feedback, whether people are feeling recognized - see above). At PRIME MOVERS they take anonymous feedback on a weekly basis on a number of metrics, it's an app that automatically sends a quick couple questions over Slack, which aggregates all the data. It's called OfficeVibe.
- **On knowledge management:** Keeping track of decisions made in meetings -> put it into project management tools (also for discussions on specific tasks) and create templates. Have one place where you capture things for a project. Have one structured place for all ideas to do with this project/team etc. and make sure everyone contributes.
- **Plan your meetings well** (you need solid structure in your meetings - it saves time). PRIME MOVERS spend around an hour per a 3 hour Jour Fixe to organise and plan a meeting.

Structure & decision making:

- Unlikely that everyone knows every aspect of an organisation in the same way (=argument against everyone deciding on everything).
- **Authority to take decisions comes from knowledge and experience**, not from your position title.

Other interesting points:

- **"If it's not broken, then don't fix it"** - on making changes in your strategy
- **Stick to your goals** (even if you get great (funding) offer for a new project). If it doesn't fit into your goals, which means also your resources, then don't do it.
- **Celebration** is important! Celebrate little milestones.
- **Ask yourself: "How can I use our resources the best way to contribute to..?"** If you are looking for focus as an organisation.
- At PRIME MOVERS they discuss this **3 key things in every Jour Fixe** to update each other: **Progress, Problems, Plans**. This is a part of the **"OKR system"** (Objectives & Key Results), which we use for each social startup.
 - **Progress:** what we have done last week for this Key Result,
 - **Plans:** what we are planning to do next week and
 - **Problems:** whether there are any problems you foresee for this Key Result for the next week (so we can be proactive about potentially arising problems).

Other interesting points (continued):

- **Trust between peers is important.** A big part of trust comes from believing in the same kind of goal, which can be improved if you increase communication between peers. This starts with creating the right space for your team members.
- **An effective team EMERGES** (it's not something that you can control).

"You are responsible for creating the right soil, and picking the right seeds and the right conditions for an effective team to emerge."

- **SELF-REFLECTION** (on being too active, in several organisations). Ask yourself: **Why am I overcommitting myself?**
 - **Delegation is important.** Set acceptable standards, but focus on the right things (especially as a leader) and delegate the rest, micro-management doesn't benefit anyone. Consider that it takes less of your time to teach someone once to do it than continuing doing it yourself many times. Remember to take your opportunity costs into account, by failing to focus on other things. **But delegation isn't the only issue**, if you feel that your team is not able to complete things in a high quality manner, ask yourself "why" 5 times again, chances are you haven't onboarded them or your onboarding was not effective.
 - **Failing is part of the journey.** And: Don't let yourself be intimidated by people looking at you like you're crazy & telling you that your new organisation/project won't work, just because they have a restricted view on what is possible. **Once again:** You are what you think (and: your organisation is a reflection of what you think is possible). Your mindset is crucial!
 - **The most touching thing for Okan is the personal transformation** of his team members. This is even more important than gaining project management and similar skills.
 - **Your relationship with uncertainty matters a lot** (you have to embrace uncertainty, not only reduce uncertainty).
 - **On deciding on ideas in meetings - you can use the ICE Method:**
 - **I - How impactful do you think the idea will be towards your goals** (1-10, 10 being the most impactful)?
 - **C - How confident are you that it will work** (confidence through having previous experience)?
 - **E - How easy is this to implement considering our resources?**
 - >>> You multiply these numbers and you have an objective priority list of what to focus on. You can use a similar method for deciding strategy as well.
- > **Recommendation From Okan regarding working tools:** Clickup for project management, Slack for communication, Google Drive for documents. Slack has a non-profit discount, and a free upgraded tier which gives you useful functions where you can automate a lot of processes like welcoming and onboarding new members etc. (it's called Slack workflow-builder).

Congratulations! You've made it through all of our notes from the fireside chat.

We're leaving you with this powerful quote from the event:

"Imagine the opportunities you missed cause you thought that you couldn't do it."

Check out the Academy of Non-profit Associations/Akademie Ehrenamtlicher Vereine, subscribe to our newsletter (in German), and become a member with your organisation :)

WEBSITE: <https://www.aev-akademie.org/>

OUR TEAM:



Adriana



Eva



Denise



Valerie



Felix



Felicitas

Further interested in our speaker, systems change or PRIME MOVERS and its social startups? Check out the links below!

You can join **Okan's newsletter** here: He shares **tips among other insights from the point of a curious social entrepreneur**: <https://buttondown.email/okanmcallister>. Click **HERE** to read the last issue.

If you are curious about how **systems change** actually happens, you can read a **beginner-friendly article** from Okan here: <https://www.oneday.at/2020/12/21/introduction-to-systems-thinking/>

If you'd like to **attend ONE DAY 2021**, your discount code is now valid until **21 February 2021 at 12AM**. The discount code is **CHANGEMAKER**. You can click here to automatically apply 50% off on all tickets. Your conference ticket doesn't only give you access to **many sessions** over two days, but also gives you an annual membership to ONE DAY's exclusive **community platform**, access to all recorded sessions and more.

ONE DAY is an annual conference about systems change, focusing on waste, gender equality and responsible digitalisation. This year they have sessions with Harvard University, Yale University, Cambridge University, Uni Wien, WU Vienna, WWF, Global 2000, IDEO.org, Climate-KIC, Stadt Wien, ABZ*AUSTRIA, UN Women, and more...

If you'd like to **collaborate with PRIME MOVERS**, here are more details about what they do: <https://www.theprimemovers.org/> // <https://www.kindby.com> // <https://www.oneday.at> // <https://www.missionliftoff.com>

You can reach out to Okan at okan@theprimemovers.org.