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by

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**The Miracle Foundation: Becoming a Force for Good and the
*Seven Practices of High Impact Nonprofits***

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**The Miracle Foundation: Becoming a Force for Good and the *Seven*
Practices of High Impact Nonprofits**

By

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Report

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The Miracle Foundation: Becoming a Force for Good and the *Seven* Practices of High Impact Nonprofits

by

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This report examines the book *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*, by Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant as it applies to a particular nonprofit organization: The Miracle Foundation. The Miracle Foundation is a nonprofit based in Austin, Texas, with a mission of empowering orphans, primarily in rural India, to reach their full potential “one child at a time” in an effort to break the cycle of poverty. After an examination of The Miracle Foundation in the context of the Six Practices, the author presents a seventh practice. Additionally, this report discusses shortcomings of the nonprofit and a series of recommendations to ensure The Miracle Foundation is on a course toward being high impact. There is a particular focus on the branding and marketing strategy, as well as the unique position of The Miracle Foundation.

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Introduction

Before entering into the Advertising Graduate program, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to India with a nonprofit organization called The Miracle Foundation. This organization is the result of a dear friend who answered a calling when confronted with the staggering statistics of homeless and orphaned children in India. I was prepared to go to India with my friend and her other volunteers and be sad for these children. What I discovered was how amazing and resilient and happy these children are because of the efforts of The Miracle Foundation. I was completely overwhelmed and returned the next year to see them again. I went to India for a third time the following year.

When I set out to pursue a Master's Degree in Advertising, I knew that I wanted to focus on marketing nonprofits. I had spent years working with advertising agencies on large and small accounts, everything from fast food to automotive brands. I had always been intrigued with the way in which these brands could create such an emotional connection with the consumer. I wondered how one could do the same for social causes? I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of nonprofits, as well as a better understanding of what it takes to create brand awareness and brand loyalty and then apply that knowledge to the social sector.

During my coursework, I was able to spend time studying and analyzing The Miracle Foundation through various assignments. I was also given the assignment through an Account Planning course to understand how to engage young adults in social responsibility, which provided great insight as to the mindset behind donating and volunteering. Finally, I read a recommended book about what makes for a highly

impactful nonprofit. As I prepared to start work on my final Professional Report, it became clear what the focus would be. I want to see this organization continue to prosper, and therefore, I want to try to provide some insight on what it takes to set a small nonprofit based in Austin, Texas on a course toward becoming a global movement.

Methodology

This report will examine the book *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High Impact Nonprofits*, by Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant, and apply it as a framework for examining The Miracle Foundation, a nonprofit based in Austin, Texas, whose aim is to stop the cycle of poverty in India by empowering orphans through its initiatives. As the Six Practices are examined in relationship to this particular organization, there will be a series of recommendations for The Miracle Foundation based on the findings, including specific marketing recommendations.

Much of the primary research was conducted in the form of interviews with the leadership team at The Miracle Foundation, including numerous personal interviews with Caroline Boudreaux, founder and CEO, conducted over several months. Additionally, interviews with the COO, the Travel Coordinator, and Miracle Foundation volunteers provided additional insight. Significant insight on The Miracle Foundation was also derived from the author's own intimate relationship with the organization as a participant observer, volunteer, sponsor, donor, and participant in three different visits to India to work directly with constituents of The Miracle Foundation. Secondary research included reviewing Turk Pipkin's video about the organization, along with its website and newsletters, communication pieces, and information found during previous research during a separate communications audit conducted in Fall 2009.

The approach is meant to mimic that taken by the authors of *Forces for Good*; however, unlike its authors, this author believes there is perhaps one more Practice that is being overlooked.

Meet The Miracle Foundation

The Miracle Foundation began on Mother's Day 2000 when founder, Caroline Boudreaux, visited an orphanage in rural India while on vacation with a friend. There she met Sheebani Das, a 3-year-old little girl that was filthy and hungry. After spending the day with Sheebani and the other children, experiencing the horrific living conditions, appalling sleeping arrangements, lack of food and clothing, and utter filth these children were living with, Boudreaux knew she had to do something. Upon returning home to Austin, Texas, Caroline Boudreaux began working diligently to set up The Miracle Foundation, or TMF.

Initially Boudreaux had hoped to help find homes for these children and facilitate adoptions. She quickly learned that the time and resources needed to do this were great and that in the end she would be only helping one child. Soon Boudreaux shifted her focus to helping as many children as possible by creating a sponsorship program that connected donors, mostly in the United States, to a child in an orphanage in India. With \$100 per month, sponsors provide an orphan in India with food, shelter, clothing, school uniforms, an English-medium education and a loving and stable environment. Additionally, The Miracle Foundation realized there was an opportunity to take over existing orphanages and prop them up while simultaneously breaking ground on its Children's Village. Sooch Village, a million dollar undertaking, was the first project built from the ground up utilizing a series of smaller houses within a compound, in order to provide a less institutionalized, family-type setting. The model was designed to be replicated over and over. While providing the highest standard of care for these orphaned

children, The Miracle Foundation also provides a safe-haven for unwed mothers and has recently begun to embark on facilitating domestic adoptions in India.

Ten years after that life-changing day in May 2000, armed with an unchanging mission of “empowering children to reach their full potential, one orphan at a time,” Caroline Boudreaux is leading The Miracle Foundation into the future. With annual revenues anticipated to top three million dollars in 2010, and an enviable Board of Directors consisting of some the brightest minds in Austin, if not in the country, The Miracle Foundation cares for nearly 600 children across four homes around India, while implementing a strategy for continued growth in the years.

How does this success stack up against McLeod and Grant’s Six Practices? Is The Miracle Foundation on track to be as impactful as, say, Habitat for Humanity or Teach for America? If not, where are they lacking and what should they do about it? Does The Miracle Foundation have what it takes to grow and make a bigger impact that can carry on well into the future?

Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High Impact Nonprofits

In the book *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*, authors Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant reveal what they believe the secrets of success are, particular to the social sector. After four years researching thousands of nonprofits, talking to their leaders, in an effort to understand what makes a great nonprofit great, they honed in on a handful of organizations. Ultimately, they studied in-depth a dozen non-profit organizations that they determined to be examples of truly impactful organizations: America's Second Harvest, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, City Year, Environmental Defense, Exploratorium, Habitat for Humanity International, The Heritage Foundation, National Council of La Raza, Self-Help, Share Our Strength, Teach for America, and Youth Build USA. Crutchfield and Grant set out to explain the common practices across these organizations and detail the Six Practices that make them impactful. The book provides a compelling framework useful for examining other non-profits and perhaps, all businesses.

The Six Practices present a new way of examining the social sector, and its authors suggest they be emulated by any organization seeking to create large-scale change and significant impact. These practices are primarily focused on external factors more than what the organizations are doing internally: Advocate *and* serve, Make markets work, Inspire evangelists, Nurture nonprofit networks, Master the art of adaptation, Share leadership. As Crutchfield and Grant observed, “greatness has more to do with how nonprofits work outside the boundaries of their organizations than how they manage their own internal operations.”

Advocate and Serve

Per Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant, “high-impact organizations don’t just focus on doing one thing well” (Crutchfield and Grant 21). While many will start out with a focus on programs or services, they realize the need to affect policy or advocate for change in order to be high impact, be it public behavior or perception or creating laws or gaining governmental support. All of the organizations in Crutchfield and Grant’s book have engaged in both service and advocacy, though most started out with a focus on one or the other. Several specifically started out offering programs or services, like Self-Help, and through their service, uncovered a need for advocacy. In the case of Self-Help, their goal was to provide loans to low-income families. In doing so, they uncovered a disturbing trend of predatory lending practices aimed at low-income elderly, un-educated, and minorities. Self-Help engaged in a campaign to put a stop to these practices and advocated for legislative changes on the state level. Eventually, Self-Help’s advocacy led to the passing of anti-predatory lending laws in twenty-two states (Crutchfield and Grant 21).

The Miracle Foundation appears to have started with great emphasis on service. They *serve* their constituents through sponsorships and programs. TMF provides for children who are orphaned and ensures their basic rights as guaranteed by the United Nation’s Children’s Bill of Rights such as food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, but also endeavors to break the poverty cycle by providing a solid, English-Medium education so they may go on to get jobs, possibly an advanced education, in order to support themselves and eventually, their own families.

In addition to serving the children of India, they also serve un-wed mothers who are sent away from their families in disgrace and have nowhere or no one to turn to. These young women are provided food and shelter, prenatal care, and a safe, nurturing environment in which to give birth. Once born, these infants can be put up for adoption to stable families, while the mothers are offered work with The Miracle Foundation and hope for a future. Without this program, these women have nowhere to go and often end up giving birth in unthinkable conditions and abandoning their babies, or worse. In desperation, some of these mothers attempt to kill their unwanted babies. One such child survived and was found in a riverbed and brought to one of The Miracle Foundation homes for children. He is severely physically and mentally retarded and will need constant care throughout his life. These are the very reasons the Unwed Mother program was started.

For The Miracle Foundation, to serve is to work to get these children off the streets, and get as many adopted as possible. Essentially, as Boudreaux indicates in interview after interview, there are 25 million children living in the system, and another million pouring into the system each year (due to parents dying of AIDS, poverty, or simple curable diseases). Fewer than 4,000 domestic adoptions take place each year in India, so unless you do something for all those in the system, the problem will continue to get bigger. TMF seeks to break cycle of poverty by helping those “in the system” by improving their lives and their living conditions (Pipkin).

For Boudreaux, advocacy at this point is more a function of what is happening in America, while the serving is happening in India (Boudreaux). What The Miracle Foundation considers a large part of their advocacy is that they are able to give the

“untouchable” children in India a voice. Poor and/or orphaned children don’t have a voice and someone has to decide to be that for them, whether in the United States, India or any other country, developed or not. Furthermore, TMF maintains the voice they provide the children and the services they render are the best possible form of foreign relations that exists (Boudreaux). Additionally, according to Boudreaux, quite simply, “it’s the right thing to do” (Boudreaux). While the service arm of TMF plays out in India, what TMF is also advocating is changing perception here in the United States. The apathy or the sense that “we can’t do anything to help...the problem is too hard, too big, or too far away” that exists among many Americans is a major threat to The Miracle Foundation’s mission and they are faced with overcoming that challenge constantly in order to raise funds and in turn have greater impact.

That said, there are some forms of advocacy taking place in India, specifically in regard to its laws. One example is The Miracle Foundation’s model for living arrangements within its children’s homes. In its attempt to raise children in an environment that is as close as possible to living like a typical nuclear family, the children live in small houses situated within the compound, with a housemother and boys and girls of various ages under one roof. Just as in most homes, boys and girls have separate bedrooms while sharing bathrooms and common areas. Law in India mandates these children (orphans or children living in a group home) need to be segregated by age and gender. TMF wants the government to see that the Family Model might be better than the Institutional Model, and that while it may not be in accordance with the law currently, that does not make it wrong.

The long-term goal is to have every child adopted. The Miracle Foundation only just received a license for domestic adoptions in early 2010. This process takes a long time and can be very corrupt so TMF has to be cautious and strategic in their approach. Part of their strategy includes, as an example, choosing to build homes in states in India where adoption laws allow TMF easier acquisition of a license. The most recently completed children's home, Sooch Village, is situated in the state of Jharkhand, India.

The Miracle Foundation has in place a 1000-day plan that is attainable and scalable and will create lasting programs and support for its children and staff. Indeed, The Miracle Foundation is making huge strides in its service to the children and is true to its goals, but it has just begun to scratch the surface in regard to its advocacy efforts. If TMF is going to have significant impact in the years ahead and make an even greater impact in breaking the cycle of poverty in India, it has to be willing to take on the Indian government; a scary proposition not doubt. Boudreaux admits it is one of the greatest threats to the mission of The Miracle Foundation.

The government of India has, as an example, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, which makes the transfer of funds from The Miracle Foundation in Austin to TMF in India difficult. Such a law is understandable as the spirit of it is to monitor foreign monies entering India in an effort to prevent the funding of terrorist and drug trafficking activities. Ironically what it ends up doing is restricting funds that come in as aid in the process. There needs to be consideration for organizations such as TMF for which delayed delivery of funds results in not being able to buy food for hundreds of children. This problem is escalated even more with capitol expenditures when trying to build a million dollar children's village.

Another pressing issue is the state of adoption and adoption laws in India. The process is long and tedious and many would-be parents wait for children while millions of children are in need of a home. Additionally, if these children are not properly “released” for adoption, placing them can be very difficult and sometimes impossible. “Properly released” refers to infants and children who are abandoned by their mother or other family members who are unable to care for them. They are never truly or legally “given up” and as a result many find themselves stuck in the system. This is another reason the Unwed Mother Program was initiated, in order that the newborn child is released by its mother and thus available for adoption.

Cultural differences and beliefs can add to the obstacles faced by The Miracle Foundation, despite that its entire staff in India is in fact Indian. There are many Indians that strongly believe that orphans are a product of Karma that it is their lot in life to be parentless and live in poor conditions because of something they did. Others hold on to the notion of the caste system, which dictates that you are born into a certain level of society and there you shall remain, thus he who sweeps the floor will always sweep the floor. Still others believe Karma dictates that giving their child up for adoption will result in a horrific fate in their next life (and so better to just abandon them). Many Indians quite simply see adoption as taboo and struggle with the concept in general, but especially the idea of international adoption.

Here might be another opportunity to advocate for change not only in policy but also in terms of public behavior. Boudreaux contends that domestic adoption will be the focus for placing children in India because international adoption is too lengthy, difficult and corrupt. Even if they opt to partner with international adoption agencies rather than

facilitate these types of adoptions directly, there is opportunity for change. In simplest terms, there is an estimated 25 million orphaned children needing homes, while countless adults who wait to become adopting parents, millions in the United States alone, not to mention India, and the only thing standing in the way is government bureaucracy. In Caroline Boudreaux's own words, only four thousand domestic Indian adoptions are taking place each year. Why is that and what is being done about it? Taking this on would not be an easy task by any stretch but then attempting to break the cycle of poverty is a huge undertaking in the first place. Advocating for more efficient, less corrupt adoption laws domestically as well as internationally could prove to make a tremendous impact and speaks to the very core of the mission of The Miracle Foundation.

What makes the organizations in Crutchfield and Grant's book so impactful is that they see problems and injustice as an opportunity, not something to shy away from. While serving the children, if The Miracle Foundation can concurrently be advocating for systemic change in the policies and laws that slow down or stand in the way of its mission, it can achieve much greater impact long term.

As the book's authors point out, it takes resources to advocate. Just as The Miracle Foundation needs volunteers, donors, partners, staff and allies to implement its services, likewise, it needs the same to affect change. Fortunately, TMF has a few Indian-born board members who may have insight to the culture and dynamics of the Indian government and might be able to help determine a course of action for initiating change over the years to come. Perhaps there are other organizations either in India or the U.S. that TMF could forge alliances with in order to leverage their position? Maybe there are groups that could serve to lobby the Indian government? TMF needs to address

resources for advocacy in its long-term strategy, which may mean raising funds earmarked specifically for those efforts.

Crutchfield and Grant acknowledge that advocacy can be about changing law or public policy, but it can also be about changing public behavior, which The Miracle Foundation has tended to in some ways, but more for the purpose of raising awareness and funds. Regardless, they note that most nonprofits believe in being focused on one or the other, but for those seeking to be *truly high-impact*, they must be willing and committed to both advocate *and* serve.

Make Markets Work

Crutchfield and Grant found that the twelve organizations they studied in *Forces for Good* worked with businesses to further their mission in three main ways: to change a business's practices, partner with businesses, or actually run a business. Changing a business practice refers to concepts such as moving a corporation toward an underserved market, or using sustainable materials. For a non-profit, partnering with a business can mean anything from corporate donations and volunteers to broader corporate sponsorships or alliances. Actually running a for-profit business arm as a non-profit allows it to charge for goods or services that can then go back into the programs that support its mission, ultimately making it less dependent on donations (ideally).

The Miracle Foundation currently has several corporate partnerships that serve myriad functions in furthering its goals. Some notable examples are Dell, AMD, Four Hands, and I3 Global.

Both Dell and AMD, high-tech companies based in Austin, Texas, support The Miracle Foundation's goal of having fully outfitted computer labs at each children's

villages so they may provide the children with computer skills as well as the local community.

Four Hands, an import goods and furniture retailer based in Austin, Texas, provides up to \$40,000 in annual donations, sponsors 20 children, provides furniture for TMF offices in Austin as well as to the homes in India. Not surprisingly, the owner and Founder, Brett Hatton also serves on TMF board.

I3, a global healthcare company, donates funds to TMF specifically earmarked for healthcare for the children in India, which is not only in line with their own business model but also serves their objectives for giving, corporate social responsibility, and cause-related marketing. Additionally, they engage employees to give on a personal level by doing various fun, morale-boosting drives. For example, they might set aside a day to encourage employees to bring a five-dollar donation for The Miracle Foundation and in exchange, they get to wear jeans to work instead of a suit. This not only benefits TMF, but they now have, in turn, helped I3 become a force for good.

The Miracle Foundation has several other partnerships that provide much needed volunteers, donations, goods, and services. In large part because of these partnerships, 83% of funds go directly to the mission and serving the children.

Another way The Miracle Foundation generates funding is through its travel program, which, in many ways, operates as a for-profit program within the nonprofit. The Miracle Foundation has keenly (and unwittingly) tapped into an ever-growing trend in travel typically referred to as “voluntourism.” Google the word “voluntourism” and a number of companies pop up ready to help you plan a “volunteer vacation” to experience “feel good travel” across countless countries doing any number of tasks. While many

people are comfortable finding a flight and hotel accommodations online, stepping into a volunteer role in a remote part of a foreign country can be a little more complicated and a daunting task for most. These voluntourism companies, including the travel program at The Miracle Foundation, provide clients an opportunity to travel and visit foreign places, take part in sight seeing and exploring, and experience something new and different, all while being immersed in a different culture. Participants enjoy many of the benefits of a vacation while taking part in a volunteer mission where service can mean anything from construction projects, to providing health care, to disaster relief. Some travelers set out to simply add meaning to their vacation, while others set out for a life-changing journey.

When volunteers decide to participate in one of The Miracle Foundation's organized "voluntourism" trips to India, they pay TMF the cost of hotel, transportation, and meals at a rate of cost plus about fifteen percent. This allows TMF to cover the cost of its dedicated travel program staff--specifically it's Travel Coordinator and Tour Leader, Barbara Joubert. Trips can be customized to each individual and can run from a week up to three weeks, including time at different children's homes along with sight seeing excursions including a visit to the Taj Mahal. The cost can vary dramatically depending on extras, but the average cost per person for a 10-day trip will run around \$2,500 per person including airfare plus a *suggested* donation. Additionally, The Miracle Foundation has a program, Passport to Giving, which encourages travelers (going to India or anywhere else) to access a dedicated site when booking online travel and in turn funnels commissions back to The Miracle Foundation in the form of donations.

The Miracle Foundation travel program is ever evolving, just like the rest of the programs in the organization. Currently, the average number of travelers going with

TMF to India each year is around 50-75 people. Their goal is to keep the trips intimate so the experience will be more enjoyable overall. Why not take as many people as possible? This program needs to be scaled up immediately and as much as possible. If there is no cost or additional overhead required and each traveler pays cost plus 15% along with a *recommended donation*, why not hire additional staff and take hundreds of volunteers each year? As the number of children and children's homes increases, there is opportunity to have volunteers across several homes at regular intervals throughout the year. Not only does TMF benefit from these travelers and volunteers in the short term, but everyone of them has the potential to become an evangelist for The Miracle Foundation, which has a lifetime monetary value long past the time spent in India. This is not to imply that TMF in anyway become a travel agency or turn its children's homes into tourist destinations, but to suggest that the travel program grow commensurate with the growth of the organization and maximize an opportunity to touch as many people as possible while also generating revenue. This will also be discussed more in another section.

When targeting whom to recruit for these trips, The Miracle Foundation should consider appealing to college students, as well as older professionals and active philanthropists. College students, while short-term may seem to provide a low return on investment in terms of becoming active sponsors and donors, prove to go on to start their careers and later provide financial support to those organizations they have a connection with. Meanwhile, though they may lack the funds to financially support The Miracle Foundation upon returning from India, students have proven they can be called on to volunteer their time and spread the word about their experience. Conversely, the

professionals and active philanthropists tend to support The Miracle Foundation financially, recruit others, and take on committee positions and other active roles in the organization almost immediately after their experience as a volunteer traveler. Additionally, they often have the means to return to India on multiple trips

Crutchfield and Grant explain that great nonprofits figure out how to leverage free-market systems for social-impact and some of the organizations they studied run their own for-profit businesses to generate earned income. The Miracle Foundation has tapped into a market and a need (maybe even a demand) in voluntourism, along with a great opportunity to Make Markets Work, but they have only begun. They know how to execute the travel program, now the question is whether or not it is scalable and if not, what will make it so in order to maximize capacity and ensure the voluntourism program at TMF reaches its full potential.

Inspire Evangelists

Crutchfield and Grant realized that cultivating evangelists for a cause was integral to creating a high impact non-profit. This process starts with bringing in outsiders by creating ways for people to engage with the organization, communicating the mission and then providing meaningful experiences.

Through its travel arm and voluntourism program, The Miracle Foundation has tapped into a powerful tool for not only creating revenue and donations, as mentioned earlier, but also for cultivating true *evangelists*. By definition, an evangelist is one who brings the gospel to others or takes up a cause and shares it with others. In this case, the gospel is the work being done by The Miracle Foundation and the results it produces. By

taking people to India to meet and spend time with the children served by The Miracle Foundation, while simultaneously enjoying a dramatically different cultural experience, participants are so changed and emotionally invested that they continue to be sponsors, volunteers, and true evangelists long after returning home. They recruit others to go to India, they sponsor one or more children themselves (if they were not already doing so), and they fundraise and pool their resources to further the larger goals of The Miracle Foundation. Barbara Joubert, Travel Coordinator for The Miracle Foundation, explains, “We don’t need help or work or paint...but for transformation to take place...not for the kids but for the volunteer.” In fact, Joubert considers it her responsibility to make sure things run smoothly so that people are able to fully engage in the experience without any hassle (Joubert).

The travel just to reach any one of the remote locations in India where the children’s homes are located is in itself an adventure consisting of numerous modes of transportation (trains, planes, and automobiles). Once situated in the town of one of the children’s villages, a typical volunteer’s day with The Miracle Foundation starts with the travel group meeting over breakfast and a discussion about the day’s agenda and any tasks that need to be accomplished. On the first day, each volunteer is assigned several children to ensure every child receives attention from a volunteer. The day’s agenda might include recording video greetings with every child that will then be emailed to his or her sponsor, or interviewing and observing children to add notes to their personal file that is kept by The Miracle Foundation. Some volunteers may be asked to engage the staff and housemothers. Often volunteers will plan to serve based on their skills or profession, such as a dentist or doctor providing basic examinations or a physical

therapist devising a rehabilitation program. There is plenty of time allowed for playing games, eating ice cream, practicing English, singing, dancing, drawing and so on. The day concludes with the children heading to dinner followed by study time or bed, while the volunteer head back to the hotel to have dinner and re-cap the day's events. This takes place over four to five days at each children's home or village. The volunteers are fully immersed in the children and the culture, and their primary task is to interact with the children, while gathering information for their files is secondary. The final farewell from the children is usually more tearful for the volunteers than it is the children.

Barbara Joubert sees first hand that "when they go they keep coming back...they think they will go for the kids but they come back over and over for themselves." While volunteer groups are requested to complete a few tasks, The Miracle Foundation is satisfied for people to go just to meet the kids, without lifting a finger. Joubert then asks of them, "What will you do AFTER this trip, after you meet these kids, now that you have seen them and seen what's possible?"

What most voluntourists expect at the onset is to meet sad, hungry children. What they encounter are happy, thriving children. As Boudreaux explains to volunteers, what they see is the solution, not the problem. Volunteers realize they are seeing the end result of the work that's being done by TMF and because they can see exactly where the money is going and what it's doing, they are motivated to be a part, to become and evangelists for The Miracle Foundation.

Case in point, Ken Kuznia. Kuznia went with The Miracle Foundation on a trip in March of 2008. Kuznia recalls how "present" he could truly be for the experiences because he had none of his usual distractions such as email, cell phone, or career. He

explains that as he traveled across the country toward the children's home, he would see poor, hungry, homeless men, women, and children staring at him from outside his train. He recalls the blank, empty look in their eyes and thinking to himself, "Have they no soul?" Then he recalls finally reaching the orphanage and the first time he saw the children and how "bright and happy, beautiful, smiling, and amazingly full of joy" they were (Kuznia). He realized the stark contrast was due to The Miracle Foundation, and that while TMF children don't have much, they are thriving because they have been given love, have been told they matter, and now have hope. Kuznia was inspired by what one woman's actions, Caroline Boudreaux, had set in motion, and he has been an evangelist for The Miracle Foundation ever since. Before that trip, Kuznia had never been much of a volunteer and had not really felt compelled to donate money to a cause. Now, Kuznia serves on a committee for TMF, donates money on a monthly basis, and volunteers his time in other various capacities. He also recruits others constantly to sponsor a child, give a donation, or travel to India, sharing his story every chance he gets. Like so many others, Kuznia's trip changed the trajectory of his life. As Joubert explains, "They come back home, and The Miracle Foundation is part of their daily vocabulary."

Once the voluntourists return back home, they are given a new title by The Miracle Foundation, appropriately, "Ambassador." What they do in this new role varies. For some, it may mean introducing their wealthy friends (or powerful or influential) friends to TMF, for others, it may mean sponsoring one or more children, and for others it may be ongoing volunteering. "It's an organization committed to recognizing what people can contribute in tiny ways to very big ways." Joubert explains.

Barbara Joubert also maintains that key to the travel program is the “follow up” so the Ambassador program remains strong; otherwise the benefits of taking people to India are totally lost. In fact, one volunteer, Caroline Phillips, returned from her trip in early 2009 and was determined to find out what she could do to serve The Miracle Foundation on an ongoing basis. A position was created for her: Ambassador Coordinator. Phillips facilitates communication between The Miracle Foundation and its Ambassadors. She helps to host Ambassador events and recruits Ambassadors to attend fundraisers and speak with potential donors about their experience. Phillips even encourages Ambassadors to “dress the part” at events and don saris, and other traditional Indian dress, complete with “bindi” on the forehead of the women, in order to create a richer experience for the other guests.

According to the authors of *Forces for Good*, within the process of inspiring evangelists, the “rules of engagement” are as follows: Communicate your mission, vision, and values, Create meaningful experiences, Cultivate evangelists, and Build a beloved community. The last step is key and where The Miracle Foundation has room for improvement. To further explain, this concept, per Crutchfield and Grant, requires that “once you’ve built a larger community, cultivate it over time by providing ways for members to connect through conferences, communication tools, technology, and alumni programs.” Without initially intending to, The Miracle Foundation has developed a powerful tool for inspiring evangelists through its travel program. TMF is communicating its vision and certainly creating meaningful experiences for volunteer travelers, which in turn serve to cultivate evangelists. Even for its sponsors and supporters that are not able to travel to India, The Miracle Foundation endeavors to create

meaningful experiences by providing video messages of their sponsored child, along with providing updates and packages a couple of times throughout the year with detailed information about the child's life, including the child's artwork and a recipe to make the actual traditional Indian dal (lentil dish) that is a staple of the child's diet.

In order to become high-impact now and into the future, The Miracle Foundation must decide how to do what it has been doing successfully on a larger scale in order to truly “build a larger community.” More travelers and more volunteers lead to more Ambassadors and sponsors, which in turn leads to more donations and resources, which can allow TMF to serve more programs, build more homes...save *more* children.

Nurture Nonprofit Networks

High-impact nonprofits seek to nurture nonprofit networks and “freely share wealth, expertise, talent, and power with their peers, not because they are saints, but because it is in their best interest to do so” according to Crutchfield and Grant in explaining this Practice.

“We do not view any other organization as a competitor to the Miracle Foundation. We view other NGO's as key participants in fighting many issues that must be addressed. Our belief is that we are not fighting for a limited set of resources; our belief is that we are all working to increase the size of the donation pie so that each of us can maximize the results we provide to our constituents,” explains Elizabeth Davis, COO of The Miracle Foundation (Davis). The Miracle Foundation has several nonprofit alliances, but two relevant examples are GlobalGiving and Architecture for Humanity.

According to its website, GlobalGiving “is an online marketplace that connects you to the causes and countries you care about. You select the projects you want to support, make a tax-deductible contribution, and get regular progress updates - so you can see your impact.” The Miracle Foundation partnered with this nonprofit in 2009 to be included on their site, targeting fundraising specifically for its Unwed Mothers program. The campaign raised more than \$22,000, 15% of which goes to GlobalGiving to support their mission: build an efficient, open, thriving marketplace that connects people who have community and world-changing ideas with people who can support them. This alliance allowed The Miracle Foundation to potentially reach a new base of donors as well as increase awareness of its Unwed Mother Program. Meanwhile, both organizations end up supporting the larger goal of promoting trust and transparency in the global giving community and promoting other smaller “grassroots” charitable organizations.

Another example of a significant nonprofit alliance is The Miracle Foundation’s current collaboration with Architecture for Humanity. Architecture for Humanity’s goal is to provide architectural and design services through a network of 40,000 design professionals willing to donate their time and services. The organization also seeks to provide design services to communities in need, particularly those in crisis, such as the reconstruction efforts in Haiti following the earthquake in January 2010. Architecture for Humanity believes that where resources and expertise are scarce, innovative, sustainable and collaborative design can make a difference. The firm is providing services to help The Miracle Foundation build a new children’s home in Birmatrapur, in the state of Orissa, India, funded almost entirely by Austin Ventures, a venture capital firm based in

Austin, Texas. According to Architecture for Humanity's website, where one can read and follow the progress of the project as well as see pictures and design sketches and renderings, the goals of the project include the following language:

Community involvement will be encouraged both during the process of design and while in construction. Local employment will be encouraged wherever possible. The design of the building will include spaces that can be used by the villagers as well [as the children] to encourage interaction between the community and the Home ("About Architecture for Humanity").

Unlike typical construction projects or any project where a for-profit third party is hired, the mission and values of The Miracle Foundation and Architecture for Humanity are driving the project and are prevalent in all aspects of execution.

The Austin Ventures project is in the early stages; however, The Miracle Foundation completed its first children's village in 2008 with the help of the Austin-based Sooch Foundation. The Sooch Foundation is "a privately funded charitable foundation headquartered in Austin, Texas. Our mission is to make a positive and permanent change in the lives of economically disadvantaged people of any age, through funding of educational activities and social services that facilitate educational opportunities" ("Our Mission"). According to the Sooch Foundation website it's goal is to fund projects in India that "lift people out of poverty." The Miracle Foundation clearly allows Sooch Foundation to further this goal and presents an ideal partnership opportunity for both organizations. As Crutchfield and Grant conclude, "The best groups look for ways to share credit and shine the spotlight on other organizations." (Crutchfield and Grant 127) The Miracle Foundation embodies that concept as evidenced by the fact

that nothing is ever named for The Miracle Foundation but rather, for those who contribute. The children's village built by Sooch Foundation is aptly named "Sooch Village," and each house name is decided by donors (that had made at least a \$10,000 donation): Austin house, Healy house, Boudreaux house, and so on.

While The Miracle Foundation has made significant strides in partnering with organizations to help facilitate services to its constituents, TMF might consider seeking alliances with non-profits in India, especially when attempting to advocate for adoption law reform or other policy change. Partnerships with the likes of nonprofit (or even for profit) adoption agencies, as well as nonprofits serving orphaned children, street children, or marginalized women of India would serve to leverage the resources of each for greater impact toward change. As Boudreaux always says, "Nothing is heavy if everyone lifts" (Boudreaux). And as the authors explain, the high-impact nonprofits they studied shape government policy and seed social change by engaging and mobilizing millions of individuals and by doing so change attitudes and behaviors. This should be key to The Miracle Foundation strategy going forward in order to create significant impact and lasting change that truly will interrupt the cycle of poverty in the long run.

Master the Art of Adaptation

Important for any business is to learn from its mistakes so it is no surprise that this Practice is considered to be an important trait necessary for success. *In Forces for Good*, Crutchfield and Grant conclude that successful organizations must remain agile and able to respond according to external cues. The authors go on to break down the cycle of adaptation into phases: Listen, Experiment and innovate, Evaluate and learn, and finally,

Modify. This is especially important in the formative stages of an organization, and it is likely easier to be nimble while still relatively small.

When the Miracle Foundation launched, it was simply with the all-encompassing mission of helping the orphan children of India. Initially, the founder and early supporters felt it might be possible to get these children adopted, so they began to pursue an adoption license and build alliances with those that could further the goal of finding families (in America) for these many parentless children, such as adoption agencies and home study services.

This was a very lengthy, expensive and frustrating process for all involved. Founder Caroline Boudreaux, came to the realization, after having met with a trusted advisor, that she needed to find a way to help these children in greater number and that it would be easier and more impactful to support them where they are. He also shared with her the power of enabling people to give and get involved in her cause. At this point, The Miracle Foundation launched a sponsorship program and was able to help dozens of children at a time, rather than just one. What also came of out that realization was that this program would be part of the over-arching mission of the TMF, to affect change long term by breaking the cycle of poverty. By sponsoring these children and providing them with food, shelter, healthcare, education and the love and support of TMF staff and volunteers, they could go on to higher education, and/or to get jobs and support themselves and their own families.

Another example of how The Miracle Foundation adapted is found in the unwed mother program. After the sponsorship program was well underway, those working with TMF in India realized that they had an opportunity to help young, unwed mothers who

were ostracized and often banished from their homes and villages for bringing so much shame to the family for conceiving out of wed lock. Often, these young women, usually uneducated and with no place to go would abandon their babies or attempt to terminate them immediately upon their birth. The Miracle Foundation opened a home for single mothers in Simdega, Jharkhand, and began a program in which they provided these women with food and shelter and prenatal care, along with a safe and supportive environment in which they could give birth. The baby would then be cared for by TMF, and the mother, in exchange for the safe haven, would serve TMF by helping with cooking and cleaning and other duties shared by the staff. With no plans and no place to go, many of these women end up staying on to become housemothers and staff members. An additional benefit to the single mother program and giving birth in these conditions: the mother is able to formally release the infant (if she chooses not to raise it) so that he or she is available for domestic adoption.

A final example in which The Miracle Foundation demonstrated the art of adaptation is the Lunch and Learn program. Children with parents should not be in orphanages, and in fact, their basic rights indicate they should live with their parents or even other family if at all possible. Yet all too often, children were being sent to live in orphanages because the family simply could not afford to care for the children. This led The Miracle Foundation to adopt the Lunch and Learn Program whereby a child can get food, education, and support, but still remain living at home with their parents. Children in this program spend the day among the orphans, eating meals together, playing, attending school and studying in the children's home but are able to return home each evening. In exchange for this service, TMF simply requires parents to agree the child

will not be removed from the program when they become older and made to labor for the family before completing school. Again, the structure of the program serves to reinforce the mission of breaking the cycle of poverty.

The idea is that successful nonprofits make mistakes and then learn from them, and also “listen, learn and modify their approach based on external cues—allowing them to sustain their impact and stay relevant.” (Crutchfield and Grant 22). The Miracle Foundation attempted at one point to financially support orphanages without taking them over completely and realized they could not insure implementing a high standard of care in this scenario. The director of one such orphanage wanted the funds and the autonomy to do what he saw fit with those funds. As a result, TMF’s quality-of-care standards were not being met, while funds were funneled toward other initiatives. With the blessing of the Board of Directors, the very difficult decision was made to withdraw funding from the children’s home. The Miracle Foundation no longer attempts to support existing orphanages without insisting on total control and putting in place its own staff. Crutchfield and Grant observe that “Successful nonprofits focus on what *not* to do,” and this can mean making tough choices and changing or cutting, programs but it is in this process that new programs (or processes, or ideas) can emerge (Crutchfield and Grant 152).

Share leadership

The sixth and final of the Practices examined by Crutchfield and Grant explains the importance of “Sharing leadership” in order for a nonprofit to reach its true potential. Sharing leadership, the authors explain, includes sharing power, embracing different

styles of leadership, relinquishing control and hiring a second in command, and building a large, diverse board.

While Caroline Boudreaux has answered her life's calling and made many sacrifices to launch The Miracle Foundation, she certainly appears to recognize the importance of sharing leadership in order to achieve her vision. Over the past 10 years, since the inception of The Miracle Foundation, Boudreaux has become the heart of the organization, rather than the head of it. She is an integral part of day-to-day operations, fund-raising, decision making, and development. But she is not the sole leader of this organization or any branch of it. First of all, she shares leadership with her director in India, Manjeet Pardesi. Pardesi is an Indian-born citizen living part-time in Delhi, with his own (now almost adults) children, part-time at Sooch Village and part-time near the homes in Rourkela (Birimtrapur) and Bhawani. Pardesi oversees the entire operations in India and ensures that what is started and funded at The Miracle Foundation in Austin, Texas, is executed in India. Boudreaux explains that Pardesi complements her well and even though they don't always see eye to eye, there is mutual respect and an understanding that they depend on one another to further the mission of TMF. Boudreaux also adds that Pardesi is always thinking 2 steps ahead and is ready to adapt.

Caroline Boudreaux also shares leadership with her impressive board of 12, made up of entrepreneurs, social workers, community leaders and successful business people who happen to also be Indian immigrants. Crutchfield and Grant explain that the nonprofits discussed in the book all had relatively large and diverse boards. They also suggest that quality is as important as quantity and board members should be highly committed and "should bring a diverse range of skills, perspectives, and social networks"

that will serve the cause. Boudreaux regards the board of The Miracle Foundation as smart, trusted advisors and has a personal relationship with each of them. She does not hesitate to call any of them at any time to seek guidance or a second opinion and is always thinking of what type of person might be added to continue to “round out” and compliment the existing board. The *Forces for Good* authors echo this relationship stating that “great nonprofits have a positive relationship with the board” and share leadership to advance the cause.

Boudreaux also shares leadership with her staff, led by COO Elizabeth Davis. Not only does she share leadership, she considers herself accountable to those that work for and serve The Miracle Foundation both in the United States as well as in India. This approach is in sync with what Crutchfield and Grant explain is necessary for sustaining high impact: that most organizations need a second in command focused on internal management and operations, in order that the director (or founder or CEO) be able to focus on external leadership. In the case of The Miracle Foundation, the board realized that one of the things Boudreaux did best was development and fund raising. Nobody explains the story of The Miracle Foundation and the plight of the “invisible children” of India better than Caroline Boudreaux, and therefore, she remains *the best* person to ask for support and recruit for the cause. By bringing on a COO, Boudreaux is able to focus more attention on those activities that result in generating funds.

Boudreaux is regarded by her team as a great leader that is “totally humble and that lets others lead.” One staff member at TMF asserts that Boudreaux recognizes her weaknesses and hires people to complement them. She adds that Boudreaux seeks

advisement on everything; she asks “how” and *always* puts the children first, and therefore it’s not uncommon for her to ask for help (Joubert).

One aspect of great leadership that the authors touch on is the importance of developing a succession plan. Crutchfield and Grant explain that while the leadership of the nonprofits they studied had longevity, “great leaders also know when it’s time to go.” They continue:

Create a transition plan with the board that prepares for that day. Get ready for the change by cultivating leadership within the organization and preparing to hire a new director from the outside (Crutchfield and Grant 178).

The Miracle Foundation appears to have long term plans and a three-year strategy around its programs, goals, mission and growth. What TMF does not appear to have considered is what would happen to its mission if the very “heart” of the organization were to retire or have to leave for any reason. Who will carry on the mission of The Miracle Foundation once Caroline Boudreaux is no longer able? Even if that day is twenty years away, it will one day arrive, and there needs to be a plan in place to ensure that the work started by Caroline Boudreaux will not cease when she is no longer at the helm. The Miracle Foundation needs to prepare for that day.

There is no single way to prepare for succession. It could mean that Caroline Boudreaux teaches others on the staff or board how to tell her story or how she develops relationships that lead to seven-figure donations. Perhaps a strong leader is recruited from outside the organization, as was the case for most of the nonprofits discussed in *Forces for Good*. The authors attribute this to the fact that “high-impact nonprofits need

a charismatic, externally oriented leader to speak on behalf of the organization and appeal to outside constituents, whereas the COO and executive teams often perform a more managerial function” (Crutchfield and Grant 172). This would likely be an effective option for The Miracle Foundation when the day comes to find Boudreaux’s replacement. Whatever the plan for succession, it needs to be addressed in the immediate future.

The Seventh Practice: Create a meaningful brand

Forces for Good explains the Six Practices of high-impact nonprofits as observed and tested across twelve impressive and certainly impactful organizations. However, is it possible that there could be a Seventh Practice? Authors Crutchfield and Grant explain that what makes the nonprofits that they studied so great and so impactful flies in the face of conventional wisdom in the field. They mention that many of the groups are not well marketed and go on to explain that brand-name awareness is a “myth” when considering what makes for a great nonprofit. While some of the organizations are household names (Habitat for Humanity), the authors found that many of these high-impact non-profits hardly focus on marketing at all. But is it possible they have been successful *in spite* of that fact?

Habitat for Humanity International, The American Cancer Society, American Red Cross, and Big Brother Big Sisters are among the nonprofit organizations featured in the various editions of America’s Greatest Brands, an annual publication that recognizes some of the strongest and most trusted brand icons in the United States, according to the American Brands Council (“America’s Greatest Brands”). While the majority of the brands featured are for-profit consumer goods and services, the publishers realize the

importance of highlighting brands from the trillion-dollar-plus social sector. Robert Passikoff, Ph.D., Founder and President of Brand Keys, Inc., a research and consulting firm specializing in customer loyalty, provides brand insight:

Asking people what makes a great brand is like asking them to describe their favorite music, or why they love their children, their dog, or the ocean. One quickly makes a sharp left off the road of logic into the high grasses of emotion. That's because great brands have something beyond primacy of product or service, high levels of awareness, satisfaction, and ubiquitous distribution.

Great brands have meaning. They have a differentiated position that sets them apart from their competition. They stand for something in the minds of consumers. But above all that, great brands have established a bond — primarily emotional — between themselves and consumers. This bond has another name: brand loyalty (“America’s Greatest Brands”).

Brand loyalty is synonymous with customer loyalty. Nonprofits that rely on private donations and an army of volunteers or sponsors to overcome seemingly insurmountable issues such as poverty, including Habitat for Humanity or The Miracle Foundation, can benefit greatly from brand awareness and more importantly, brand loyalty. In the case of nonprofit branding, customer loyalty corresponds to donor loyalty, volunteer loyalty. After all, what are *evangelists* but loyal customers?

While some nonprofits may manage to be impactful without regard to marketing or public relations efforts, for others, it may mean the difference between charging into the future and running in place. The Miracle Foundation relies on donors and sponsors

for its children and has developed programs that could easily be scaled up in order to help thousands more. A solid marketing and public relations strategy, with an eye to creating a trusted and lasting brand and thoughtful execution, could aid this kind of growth.

Why did The Miracle Foundation partner with GlobalGiving if not to expand awareness? People want to give but they must trust where their money is going and how it will be used, and name recognition lends credibility. Most people have, at some point, seen the ChildFund (formerly Christian Children's Fund) television ads. While these ads may not have outstanding production quality or brilliant copy writing, they do provide for awareness and credibility and the numbers speak for themselves:

ChildFund International, USA (ChildFund) assists more than 15,200,000 children and family members in 31 countries worldwide. This figure includes more than 650,000 enrolled children in ChildFund's programs. Of these children more than 500,000 are sponsored children who are supported through monthly contributions. According to ChildFund's 2009 Financial Statement, the organization received more than 216 million dollars in support ("Annual Reports & Financials").

This is not meant to suggest that The Miracle Foundation must produce television ads, but simply to provide an example of the kind of growth that is possible by creating mass awareness of a brand. For TMF to continue and further its mission and realize numbers like that of ChildFund, it has to do more than one-to-one recruiting of evangelists, donors, and voluntourists, and that begins with a solid marketing plan and public relations strategy. The Miracle Foundation must have a focus on becoming a *great brand*, and then build awareness of that brand.

The Miracle Foundation has a unique value proposition in that donors can sponsor a

child for \$100 per month and that donation provides them with a one-to-one relationship with a child that they can actually go and meet in person. Not many organizations can provide such a direct relationship between its donors and its constituents and The Miracle Foundation needs to spread this message. Perhaps Boudreaux can, through her relationships and development activities, seek an endowment to cover the cost of a Marketing and Public Relations Director. The Miracle Foundation needs to seek pro bono assistance or a partnership with a large advertising agency to help reach a much larger audience than it is currently. Just as they have developed partnerships with Dell or Austin Ventures, TMF needs to seek a partnership with the like of GSD&M Idea City or Enviromedia, agencies which both invest resources in social causes.

The Miracle Foundation also needs to focus on large events that will help them raise awareness of its mission. In developing an annual event, TMF needs to consider offering something that provides a unique experience for a large number of people. By using the experience as the draw, The Miracle Foundation can get more exposure to those who may never had heard of the organization. Perhaps TMF hosts an event that gives participants “behind the scenes” access to Darrell K. Royal Stadium or an annual “Bollywood Gala” including Indian food, décor, dancing and an auction for a luxury trip to India.

Whether through an event or media message or advertising message, once these audiences have been exposed to the Indian culture, the mission of The Miracle Foundation, and the statistics surrounding Indian orphans, there is an opportunity to present them with ways to become involved: donate, volunteer, sponsor, or travel.

Conclusion

At the onset of authoring *Forces for Good*, Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant took on the task of answering the question, “What makes great nonprofits great?” They discovered Six Practices that many high-impact nonprofits had in common. The over-arching theme of their research findings indicates that great social change cannot be achieved by being focused inward on the organization but rather, by maintaining focus on external factors and continually seeking ways to work with and through others to achieve the mission. The authors indicate that many nonprofits become so focused on process and the “running” of the organization, they tend to lose sight of the big picture: to create change and have impact.

The Miracle Foundation prides itself on the depth of care and services it provides its constituents, rather than the breadth. It has developed quality scalable programs and services from its low housemother-to-child ratios to its unique model for children’s villages. TMF has grown its staff, hired a Chief Operating Officer, and built a world-class board. Now is the time for The Miracle Foundation to decide it will advocate for change on a mass scale and decide it will campaign to streamline the adoption process while making its standards the *minimum* standard of care for children everywhere. Now is the time for TMF to grow its community of evangelist through branding, awareness, public relations and broadening its voluntourism program. Now is the time for The Miracle Foundation to align with other organizations that share its values and goals to leverage against the barriers that get in the way of their mission. Now is the time that The Miracle Foundation needs to develop a long term strategy (beyond 1,000 days) to carry out its mission, including developing additional leadership and a succession plan.

The Miracle Foundation has the potential to become every bit as high-impact as the extraordinary organizations discussed in the book and is doing many things “right.” The organizations studied by Crutchfield and Grant are fairly mature, the youngest of the twelve having been founded 20 years ago (Teach for America in 1990). The Miracle Foundation’s colors are that of a sunrise because its constituents, the children it serves, are in the “sunrise of their lives.” At ten years old, TMF is in the sunrise phase as well and has the opportunity to fine-tune its processes and adapt. While still small and relatively young, TMF is able to be resilient and nimble, not unlike its children. With a minor shift in focus to incorporate more of the Practices in the book and some of the recommendations in this paper, along with a comprehensive branding and awareness strategy, The Miracle Foundation could one day find itself among the ranks of these high-impact nonprofits, achieving its mission on a scale like that of Habitat for Humanity or ChildFund, empowering not hundreds, but thousands or millions of orphans to reach their full potential...one child at a time.

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VITA

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