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From: **Sarah Lemarie via Discuss** <discuss@mickaboo.org>

Date: Thu, Jun 1, 2023 at 10:07 PM

Subject: Re: [Mickaboo Discuss] 501 c3

To: Cindy Skocypec <cindy@mickaboo.com>

Cc: General mickaboo discussion <discuss@mickaboo.org>

Hi,

Maybe it helps to share a little background here - or maybe even some fireside stories from Michelle that go back before my time (pre-2014).

I'm not sure what is driving tonight's question, but I'm happy to share some thoughts and see if they provide sufficient insight.

Mickaboo didn't have a COO for many years.

Michelle proposed that I take on the title in 2019 after I began volunteering across multiple areas and getting involved on a daily basis, but prior to that there hadn't been a COO for quite some time - we had a CEO, a CFO, a board, a board president (Tammy, one of the original founders) and then a whole host of volunteers focused on various areas in the species teams and beyond.

After Michelle stepped down last year and I took on acting CEO, we essentially reverted back to that scenario.

I'm not clinging on to the COO title especially - we could retire it for now, or reassign it if doing so made sense. Making changes at that level takes a lot of discussion and coordination even when everyone involved isn't paid :)

Retiring it for now is easy. Reassigning is a lot more delicate. In an all volunteer organization titles can mean a lot to people and they can also overwhelm people. Mickaboo operates successfully via a core set of extremely dedicated and amazing volunteers who are working really hard for us, and I would want to take their advice onboard deeply before we considered making any significant changes - we'd want a solid rationale for the change which everyone agreed on. Alignment and shared vision in a volunteer run org is everything!

My current direction is to leave the COO seat effectively open, as it isn't hurting us operationally to leave that seat empty compared to how we were operating before Michelle stepped down.

The key thing for us and my primary focus right now is to have a healthy cohort of **species coordinators** covering all the species teams, and a healthy set of **foster homes**.

Each year we typically recruit about 30-35 new foster homes, and some also stop fostering, keeping us balanced at ~170 foster homes every year for the last five year or so. **Our species coordinators are the lifeblood of our work**, and in the last couple of years we've seen some very significant changes with major rotations on the amazon, budgie, african grey and macaw teams.

Being very frank, we can get by without a COO for a few years, but we need a macaw coordinator ASAP so that Dara can focus on the wild conure team, and we need another budgie coordinator to join the budgie team per Michael's last email to Discuss about getting involved with that group. Those are much more pressing and impactful appointments. We can also use more help in the social media content editing area, online adoption fairs, document admin, and the tech team (remember that appeal on discuss for Drupal help? we're still looking!).

Most non profits don't have "species coordinators" in their org chart - but serving that role in Mickaboo is a highly decorated title where you act as a public facing member of staff of our organization making final decisions about who will care for our birds, and how many birds we will be able to save every year. If we have a healthy staff of species coordinators, then we are in pretty good shape as far as being operationally ready to receive and care for birds goes.

Pretty much everyone in Mickaboo is wearing one or more hats. Pam is our CFO and Development Director and also our PR, events coordinator and newsletter chief editor. Our tech team all have dual roles except for Matt. Michelle still has more fosters than everyone except me and she's still on the board and answers medical tickets, and I call her up any time I need a second opinion.

We rarely say it because Vincent is something of a mysterious and wonderful genius but Mickaboo could not operate without his daily commitment and endless contributions in multiple areas across technology and operations.

Every single day, we deal with making multiple medical calls for new intakes or fosters who have become sick or injured. Today we lost three budgies and discussed appointments for two macaws, and a sick finch came back to us (I'm sure there are more - that's off the top of my head). Tammy is endlessly handling these every day and I talk to her daily.

TLDR; we've gone back to not having a COO for a while, and that's okay for now. It's not my second or even third priority.

What we **do need** to do is keep our species teams healthy, build out an online self service bird care class for the adoption pipeline, and recruit more fundraisers so that we can build out a future towards having paid staff down the road for future sustainability and resilience. Mickaboo is no longer a small non-profit saving a few cockatiels every year - we're big enough that moving towards having paid staff is important to ensure that we are responsive to all enquiries and able to operate efficiently in key areas reliably without either Pam or myself completely burning out.

Working towards hiring staff to operate consistently at our current scale is a much more involved and sensitive topic than I want to tackle at 10pm on a Thursday night and there is a long roadmap of work that it will take to get us there, so I'm going to deliberately not say any more about that here.

I continue to use the term 'Acting CEO' because I agree with Michelle's recommendation that we should be moving closer to finding a ED that can lead Mickaboo with solid non profit experience and future proof the org in a number of ways that I will not have the capacity to do on my own.

I'm happy to take any questions or chat in a future Mickaboo admin happy hour like the one we had for Pam's birthday the other night.

Sarah.

On Thu, Jun 1, 2023 at 9:06 PM Cindy Skocytec via Discuss <discuss@mickaboo.org> wrote:
Hello all,

I was wondering how long it's customary for an individual to serve both the CEO and COO of the same non-profit organization?

Best,
Cindy

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Sarah Lemarié | email: sarah.lemarie@mickaboo.com

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