

What is Innovation EP69 - Monique Childress

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SPEAKERS

Monique Childress, Jared Simmons



Jared Simmons 00:05

Hello, and welcome to What is Innovation? The podcast that explores the reality of a word that is in danger of losing its meaning altogether. This podcast is produced by OUTLAST Consulting LLC, a boutique consultancy that helps companies use innovation principles to solve their toughest business problems. I'm your host, Jared Simmons, and I'm so excited to have Monique Childress.



Jared Simmons 00:29

Monique Childress is the founder and principal of Horizon Advisory Group in Atlanta, Georgia, which provides an organizational strategy services for purpose driven organizations committed to supporting and improving the lives of underrepresented communities. Horizon's mission is to help these organization leaders to define the path to their next horizon through strategic planning, organizational development, and facilitated stakeholder collaboration. She possesses 10 years experience in organizational strategy planning and consulting for nonprofits, small businesses and fortune 500 corporations. Prior to Horizon, she held leadership roles in management leadership for Tomorrow's advisory practice, and Accenture's talent and organization strategy practice where she worked with client executive and senior leadership teams on large scale human capital strategy and transformation efforts.




Jared Simmons 01:17

A Chicago native Monique holds a BSBA from Washington University in St. Louis and an MBA from the University of Michigan. She has also completed additional professional training in Human-Centered Design with the LUMA Institute; Design Sprints with AJ&Smart; an advanced facilitation training on "presencing Race, Gender, & Collective Healing"; and Diversity in the Workplace (certificate) through the University of South Florida. In her spare time, Monique teaches yoga, volunteers as Treasurer for the Atlanta Unbound Academy's Board of


Directors, and she is a mentor with Emory University's Start:ME business training program. Monique, thank you so much for agreeing to join us on the show today. I'm so excited for our conversation.

 Monique Childress 01:57


Thank you for having me. I'm really looking forward to it as well.

 Jared Simmons 02:02

Why don't we just dive in? Then tell me what is innovation?

 Monique Childress 02:06

Innovation is when curiosity is realized in a way that introduces something new, a new way of thinking, new way of working, a new way to solve a problem.

 Jared Simmons 02:20


When you talk about curiosity, what does curiosity mean to you?

 Monique Childress 02:23

When I think about curiosity, there's a few ways of looking at it. It could be daring to consistently ask, why? when you here, this is how it's always done. It can arise when you have data that signals a need to change. Data from feedback or revenue, retention, participation in different types of data. Once you get that signal, you need to take the steps to change when there's a new idea that's brought to you and you ask questions, and you might explore it or test it. Then sometimes there is no signal to change but there is a desire to just serve your audience better. That Curiosity will lead you to explore it.

 Jared Simmons 03:08

The curiosity is a driver for exploration.

 Monique Childress 03:13

They're realizing their curiosity. That's when we get into if the curiosity is the mindset, then the realization has the capability and the capacity to act on that curiosity.

 Jared Simmons 03:24

There's a lot there. That's a really great way of thinking about it. I can imagine a breakdown could be where the curiosity isn't connected to capability in the right way or there isn't. The capability to take advantage of what you learned through being curious.

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Monique Childress 03:40

Because curiosity is really the trigger for just thinking about pursuing something new or even getting an idea to think about something in a new way. When I think about the capability, that's where we're thinking about, do you live within or from an individual organization perspective, are the skills that are needed, are they there? Do you have the right tools? Do you have the right resources, the processes in place, that's where I think about the capability and then you also need the capacity to do it. You need the time for the amount of effort that it will take, you need dedicated roles to take on those responsibilities. It has to be more than curiosity to really start the actions in motion and then that's when you really get to the innovation.



Jared Simmons 04:27

Curiosity is just the instigator or the Spark.

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Monique Childress 04:31

Yes, the spark.



Jared Simmons 04:33

I like that a lot because it points to the fact that you need some fuel to be able to actually reach impact to move forward in innovation. Your description sounds like it's the capability and the capacity to actually take advantage of the spark.

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Monique Childress 04:47

Yeah, like you say is, the curiosity is the fuel and then that capability and capacity that really just been the engine.



Jared Simmons 04:56

How does this come to life as you work with your clients, I know you work a lot in the nonprofit sector, you have a background in the for profit world as well. How have you seen some of these things come to life?

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Monique Childress 05:07

Well like I said, there's different ways that curiosity can come about. For an organization that's

working deep in the community providing direct services, maybe they're just starting to get some feedback from the community members, or from their partners about something that's either not quite working, or just something more programming or different programming that they want to see. There are some organizations that can take that feedback and actually try to turn it into something actionable. Then there's other organizations where they'll get the feedback but that's really just where the conversation stops. It's really about, you know, there's the phrase, you know, better you do better. But I do for organizations, and in the work that I do with strategic planning, a lot of that initial work is just understanding, what do we know? What do we need to know? That might give us some clues on some actions to take moving forward. We're really curious about what's out there, even if there's no initial spark, whether from that feedback, and then for, for profit, that could come into play by "Okay, our revenues are down, profits are down," just taking that same type of data and doing some exploration to see why and what opportunities might come up there.



Jared Simmons 06:36

I see. It sounds like there are companies that could hear the same thing, get the same type of feedback from a stakeholder, whether it's a shareholder, or a customer, or a constituent, or someone who's benefiting from service. Two companies could hear the same thing but not necessarily be sparked to into action in the same way.



Monique Childress 06:56

Absolutely. I would say that the one that actually does take the action, they will be the more innovative of the two.



Jared Simmons 07:05

How does that get started? If I'm a company or a nonprofit organization and I'm hearing things, what's the difference between sort of hearing it and listening? You and I talked a bit before we were on about listening and the energy it takes, how do you help someone think about, okay, well, I must be getting some feedback that I'm not hearing. How do you go about doing a better job of listening to that?



Monique Childress 07:29

That makes a lot of sense. I like that a lot. I can imagine, if you spent a lot of time in a capability and capacity constrained mode, you might stop listening, you might get less curious, because you feel like you don't necessarily have the ability to act on anything you learn or hear anyway.



Monique Childress 07:29

This is where we get into the capability of the organization to listen, but also to analyze and to evaluate. For many nonprofit organizations, when it comes to their programming, there is a

element of data reporting or evaluation, that can vary in terms of the level of detail, but that's a real opportunity to capture that feedback, but also analyze the feedback and start to apply it. For the organizations that may be smaller and just not really have the time or the skill sets available to really analyze that data, they may either not know what to do with it, or they know that they could do something, but they're so under resourced, that they can't act on it. I think that's really where that capability and capacity building is really critical for nonprofit organizations to make space for innovation to occur.

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Monique Childress 08:51

Absolutely. You get overwhelmed. There's too much data and there is not an easy way to analyze it. So you just ignore it, or you just sit it to the side or maybe you just take what you need versus what the data is actually just telling you.



Jared Simmons 09:11

One of the things you're particularly good at is taking feedback, like interview responses and things and turning that into insights. Why is it important for someone to be able to take what people are saying? A lot of times we talked about innovation in the context of the data, but I think it's also important to be able to have a conversation with someone or have someone make a comment and then take that from just what they said to the insight that could move toward innovation. How do you go about doing that?

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Monique Childress 09:43

If I'm understanding the question correctly, being able to really pull those insights out, I think one that's where it's beneficial to have an outside consultant coming in to really help you to capture that data because we're listening for what's being said and when it's not being said. We're making connections in our head as the interviews are going on with other interviews or conversations that we've had with the organization, really, before the interviews even start, is working with the organization to understand, okay, what do you already know? Or what do you already think you know about your stakeholders? What would you want to know from them that maybe you just haven't had an opportunity to ask? And maybe they haven't offered it up? Or maybe they have responded to a survey in the past or something, but you weren't in the space to really take that information? So here's an opportunity to really ask again, and get context and ask those follow up questions based on what the goals are for the insight. For some clients, it's just the insights gathering engagement, we just want to do like a voice of the audience. But for others, that might be just the first step in a strategic planning process or maybe we're looking at their operating model and making some changes there. We're looking to make some changes, we're looking to set goals, but we want to first know where we're starting.



Jared Simmons 11:09

Have you been involved in processes like this, where that first step, which I think is super important, where that first step is not necessarily done in a quality way. What's the risk if you don't spend the right amount of time and effort on the front end listening?

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Monique Childress 11:25

Yeah, I've seen it where the sources of the data, so the people that are identified for interviews, or just the types of people it's really missing is not telling the full story. Maybe we're only talking to partners where you have a really great relationship with but there might be some other partners that maybe have fallen by the wayside, and they are rooting for your organization from the sidelines, but their relationship just needs a bit of repair, that would be a great source to talk to, as long as the bridge isn't burned, if they're open to talking, they clearly understand what challenges are lying ahead for the client. They understand what may have gotten in the way before for a solid relationship and they're thinking about what they would need to see to move forward and maybe reestablish that relationship.

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Monique Childress 12:20

Other times, it's not really getting the voice of the community. As I mentioned, working with nonprofit organizations, is almost equivalent to a for profit organization, not talking to their customers, to see what their customers want, how the customers experience the organization. Well, with the nonprofit organization, let's talk to the community. Let's see, what's the perception of the community? Is there trust? What type of programming do they need? What type of support do they need? How do they feel engaged and heard from the organization? What more do they need to see from the organization to increase their trust and support and really be one of the vocal supporters across the community to continue to build that base? I've seen that more often than I would like to see of not getting that connection to the community to get their voices in.



Jared Simmons 13:15

That's so important and it's a great analogy. I think anyone would agree that it would be ridiculous for a for-profit company not to talk to their customers. But somehow in when it gets translated into the nonprofit world, it doesn't seem as self evident that you should be talking to the community and to your constituents. I think sometimes the passion gets in the way, because nonprofit leaders are often passionate about the mission of the organization. Sometimes that passion leads you to believe that you already know because you have a point of view, or maybe you've experienced what the problem that you're trying to solve with organization but that doesn't mean that yours is the only point of view on that problem. I think it can feel like that when you're passionate. I was in this situation, I know what it feels like, I think sometimes leads to people not necessarily engaging folks the way that they could.

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Monique Childress 14:04

I think there's a really good point, assuming that your experience, not just as a leader, but as an individual will be the same for the communities that you're serving, especially if there's some overlap with circumstances or demographics. But I think also when you talk about that, that passion led leadership, that's one way to really keep your staff engaged, as everyone is very passionate, very purpose driven. But it also gets into the conversation and some nonprofit leaders don't really like when they hear it, but nonprofit is just a tax status. It's still a business.

They don't operate like a business because they just want to do what's right for the community. They want to just provide the services and so not really thinking about it strategically as a business that sometimes also gets in the way of why we're not thinking about talking to the community.

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Monique Childress 15:05

One last thing that I'll add is just not seeking the community because you assume that you already know what their experiences are. Then there's that thinking about the nonprofit as a business to run but then there's also conflicting stakeholders. One of the reasons why, like we mentioned, to go get the voice of the customer for a business, a for profit business, that would make sense, because the customers don't want to spend any money, right. Whereas with the nonprofit organization, if they're heavily funded by foundations, then the community, to kind of compare to a startup, the community would be the users, but they're not the customers. So you spend time talking to those that are doling out the funds, which would be the donors, the sponsors, the foundations, and they don't always have the an understanding of the needs of the community.



Jared Simmons 16:07

I couldn't agree with that more. It's a very unique challenge within the nonprofit space. I agree with what you said. My only build on that is it also I think, affects your operational strategy sometimes. Because it can feel like raising more money, or landing a new donor, or getting a new grant from a new foundation can feel like work and impact. It's great and it's necessary, but it's not impact its resources, its fuel, to then turn into impact into the community, but going out to raise a bunch of money or win grants and things like that can sometimes consume an organization to the point that you forget, let alone talking to the community but it almost becomes sort of a secondary thing to actually go out and do the work.

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Monique Childress 16:56

Yeah, like the grants and the funding, that's the means to an end. The end is the mission. It's not the funding.



Jared Simmons 17:06

Exactly. It's really tough, because there's a lot of prestige, then people always say, Oh, well, you know, nonprofits are about passionate, led by passionate people. You know, there's a lot of ego in the for profit world, there's a lot of ego in the nonprofit world, too. It's not necessarily evil, all ego isn't evil, but it's hard to overcome ego. If it makes you proud to say you've raised a million dollars or you now are funded by the so and so foundation, that's ego, now you're gonna turn that money into impact in the community. But it can be a distraction and can lead to the slowdown in innovation and the slowdown in the basic operations of the organization, if you take your eye off of that piece,

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Monique Childress 17:50

Another place where I see ego come into play is where you have the organizations that are still being led by those that founded the organization. Similar to a startup in a startup founder, it's I've identified a problem and I've identified the solution, and for a nonprofit is through programming. This is the way that we'll work on this problem. When there's other ideas that may come into play or the circumstances around the problem shift. That's where ego can come into play around, board members that may want to go in a different direction, the staff members that may be questioning the decisions that are made. Then for some founders, they're able to take the information, like we talked about earlier, take that information and do something with it. Then for others, it could turn defensive very quickly. How a founder responds to that feedback is not necessarily criticism, but it could just be suggestions or questions from people who are as passionate as the founder about whatever issue that they're working towards, they can get really defensive. That could really be a make or break moment for those organizations in terms of survival and sustainability.



Jared Simmons 19:14

So true, at some point, the organization has to outgrow the founder to become a separate entity in and of itself.

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Monique Childress 19:22

Yeah, unless you achieve your vision. Then you congratulate the organization, job well done, work on the next day.



Jared Simmons 19:33

That's a great point. Terms like ego and politics, people tend to reserve for the for profit world, but it's important to acknowledge that those things exist in the nonprofit world or they won't get addressed. This isn't a criticism of the nonprofit space. It's just an acknowledgement that human beings organized with more than one human being is involved in trying to accomplish something, there will be politics and there will be egos. The great thing about the nonprofit world is that those things are... you encounter those things in the pursuit of something positive for the world but they're still there.

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Monique Childress 20:10

They're there for any type of organization.



Jared Simmons 20:14

Exactly. Do you have an approach that you'd like to use to getting strategic planning off the ground? I know sometimes it's hard to get nonprofits out of that mission-vision conversation and into okay, what are the things we're going to go do? And what are we not going to go do?

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Monique Childress 20:35

It's interesting with most of the clients do some sort of leadership style communication and style assessment. That's usually if it's coming in to do some team building or staff retreat or something like that. But where I found it helpful, either, before we get into strategic planning, or at the very beginning, is we can start to have the conversation about, okay, based on how our leadership styles play out across this team or the organization, how is this going to show up with strategic planning in that process? Where is it going to help? Where is it going to hurt? If we are very consensus building, we're big picture thinking, we like to throw out ideas, we'd like to make sure that everyone is on the same page and we're motivating and influential in our speech, then the mission vision values, there's going to be very high energy, very high participation, when we're starting that, and that is the basis and the foundation for the plan for the organizations that I work with, even if there's an established mission vision values, where the organization. We'll still at least spend a little time to take a look to see, is it still valid? Does it need to be updated? We'll take a look at that after I share the insights from the data gathering process. Whether I did a survey or some focus groups or some interviews, community listening session, what have you, is taking these insights and saying, okay, given these insights, and in your experience with organization, is this something we need to take a look at?

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Monique Childress 22:14

I know that those sessions are gonna go really well but if they're really strong and that consensus building, that big picture thinking that rah rah communication style, then they're probably light on tactical decision making, paying attention to details, asking why. That is where strategic planning really shifts from establishing who we are and where we're headed to how we're going to get there. I've started to just let them know upfront, like, Hey, here's what I'm kind of seeing in terms of the style of the organization so as the facilitator for this process, I just keep that in mind. And I know that my project management needs to intensify right around that time, because I'm gonna lose the energy, we're gonna lose that momentum. That's something in terms of how I approach it of getting beyond the exciting parts of the strategic plan. When we talk about, like the example you gave about development, and raising X amount of money, that's part of what will help us to do what we do. But really, when we get into the execution of the plan, and how we're going to achieve these goals, this is really where the true impact happens. It's keeping them, keeping the clients and this is from the staff to the management team, the leadership team, the board members, keeping everyone aware of why we're really here, right, we're here to make impact, we're here to achieve the mission, achieve the vision. We said it in the fun part of the conversation so now let's actually do it.



Jared Simmons 24:07

Exactly, I love that approach. I particularly appreciate the way you laid it out in terms of shifting from facilitator to project manager and having both those skill sets to choose from, because a lot of times when you're facilitating, you're managing energy. Then in the project management mode, you might have to bring the energy and provide the push to keep things moving. If you don't have both skill sets, it's easy to get stuck in one or the other. Also to end up riding waves with the client, instead of being that steady force that keeps progress moving, whether there's intrinsic energy or not. The other thing that came to mind when you were describing the

different kinds of leaders and where their strengths might be and where their energy might naturally lie, is I found that the leaders who are energized by that mission, vision value element of it are sometimes intentionally, but what they think are good reasons, exclusionary, of people who are more tactical and less, less energized by the more conceptual aspect of things. People will say things like, Oh, well, you know, we don't need him in this meeting, we'll pull them in once we figured out what we want to do, things like that. For me, that's always a challenge to manage because the more you manufacture the audience, the less diversity you have and the conversation suffers. The conversation may be smoother and nicer and more fun with less diversity in the room but it's not going to be as rich and it's not going to lead to the same kinds of outcomes.

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Monique Childress 25:46

That's where you get into this is what we've always done. Yeah, the conversations will be smoother but we're here to chart a new path or we're here to make the change. You can't make a change having the same types of conversations that you've had before. If I think about the guiding principles that I really use to facilitate a strategic planning process, and when I tell clients, one of the main ones is that the process of strategic planning is more important than the plan itself, the actual output. The plan is a moment in time, it's what we plan to do from today. If we had a plan that says starting March 1, 2020, this is what we're going to do for the next three years, then by March 7, that plan does not matter because that's the point in the world, it shuts down. But the process of the plan is more important, because that's where you're building the muscle to think strategically, and to delegate, and to facilitate on your own as an organization without the consultant there.

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Monique Childress 26:07

If through the process, if you notice that some voices aren't being heard, or they're not being as encouraged to participate, that is a prime opportunity as the third party, to bring them into the conversations and to allow them to add the value that they can add. Also really watch out for the progress of the conversation so that this person isn't trying to derail progress or the conversation just to do it but for them to get on board, they just need more understanding, they need more details. If we know that this person is going to ask a lot of questions because they need more details, then how can we provide the details upfront? Or how can we bring someone else in who understands how to provide the details and do that translation? That's always my goal of this, co-created, co-collaborative process is to get everyone talking and understanding. That's why it's helpful to start off talking about the different types of styles that might be in the room because it's not a criticism on one type of style. It's just showing that these are the ways that we might have to communicate with each other that are not our natural inclinations, but it's what the other person needs to hear so you can get what you need done.




Jared Simmons 28:25


Exactly. You're going to have to slow down or have a sub-optimal conversation to be able to engage in and capture that you know, the value from the from that person.

 Monique Childress 28:31


You want to be intentional and efficient with the time that you have together. You're wasting time, if you're not.

 Jared Simmons 28:46


That's so true. I wonder if you've noticed this as well, where you have that high level conversation. Then the conceptual thinkers think, Okay, well, that's, that's done now go call Bob and whomever else and Jane, and the detail folks, and they'll figure it out from here. That handoff mindset is also, I think, a byproduct of that same dynamic you're describing, but there's value in having detail oriented people in the big picture conversations, and there's value in having big picture conceptual thinkers, in the execution phase. This diversity of thought is beneficial in both modes. But I find that especially when people are more senior and conceptual thinkers, they take the opportunity to step away once they think that "big picture work" is done.

 Monique Childress 29:37

Yeah. And I think, you know, on the flip side, I've worked with a number of teams where everyone is so bogged down in the day to day that all they can think about is execution. They can't really think beyond this week or this month and so that's where you do need that big picture thinker, that visionary, that influencer, you do need them as part of the conversation to slow down the conversation of getting into execution too quickly but once it is time to get into execution, they're the ones that's like connecting the dots around why we're doing it. So, yes, this is how we're gonna get it done but we got to connect it back to what our goals are, for this process, and over the next few years, and is this the right path to get there?

 Jared Simmons 30:31


We can't get so busy chopping down one tree that we don't look up to realize that we're in the wrong forest.

 Monique Childress 30:38

Which I will say, with the work of many nonprofit organizations, especially those that are providing direct services. It's easier said than done.

 Jared Simmons 30:47

Oh, for sure.

 Monique Childress 30:49

Especially given the last two years, but it is something and this is where we go back to you have to have the capacity to make space for conversations around innovation. What are we going to try that's new? What do we want to explore? You really have to just make that time and you have to build it into the ways that you're working so that you can still get the day to day done that does require a lot of attention, but not lose sight of as a leadership team, we also need to continue to keep our eyes a few years ahead.



Jared Simmons 31:26

It's such a delicate balance. The benefit of working with an external third party consultant like you, through that process is you're able to help to see those things. From an objective distance and help organizations operate more efficiently and effectively through that process and find things they wouldn't otherwise see, get things done more efficiently than they otherwise would. A lot of times, it can be tough consulting in the nonprofit world, because people have such a scarcity mindset. A lot of leaders can have such a scarcity mindset but that third party view is just it actually unlocks so much more impact for the community when it's done well.



Monique Childress 32:09

I think that scarcity versus abundance mindset that is something that I've been fortunate enough to have a few client leaders that are actually really excited about abundance and leadership development, and all these different trends that are happening in leadership, and they're sold. They're just trying to get their leadership team and their management teams but it is seeing that first domino of just really understanding the leaders of not even the future, but the leaders of today, and what is really going to be most helpful to make the most significant impact for the communities that are being served. It's not the scarcity mindset.



Jared Simmons 32:56

I think also something you brought up earlier, about the past couple of years, and being in execution mode, and just trying to keep up and all those things, I think, it's important to think about third party external support, just from a preservation standpoint for your team. One more project or one more thing, or one more piece of work doesn't look like much, one at a time. But over the past couple of years it things have built up and I think it's important to have some external support, even in the nonprofit world to help manage burnout and manage their stress and bring someone in who hasn't been dealing with all of this for the last two years and can look at it with fresh eyes.



Monique Childress 33:37

Well, we've been dealing with our own things but not in the day to day.



Jared Simmons 33:41

Yeah, their problem, their problem when we come to a new client, it's a new problem for us. So

we have a slightly different but you're right, their consultants have had their own dealing with are over the last couple of years. You are right about that.

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Monique Childress 33:57

But yeah, I think it is just like fresh eyes to their situations. Two things that the external consultant can provide: One is perspective. This isn't a problem specific to the organization. This is something that literally every client is talking about and trying to figure out. It's not that, you know, so good luck. But really, there's no right or wrong answer right now. That releases the constraint of getting something wrong is really like now we could just try something and see what works so just bringing in that perspective. The other thing that I think helps with having a third party, like you said around like managing the energy around it is understanding the burnout. People just don't want to have to do one more thing. I've tried to plan out the projects in a way that the time that I have with large groups for working sessions or retreats throughout the process. That is the time that they need to commit, there is not pre work, there is not work in between the sessions. That work? It'll be on the whoever the main client stakeholder, so maybe it's on the management team to really continue to lead the process forward. But if we're doing a staff session, for example, all you need to do is show up. If you could show up and give us this time, where there's a half day, understand where the stakeholders are in their energy and in their capacity, whether it be the time on their schedule, or just like the mental space that they have for it. I've found that to be really helpful,



Jared Simmons 35:47

Compartmentalizing and saying, Hey, look, this, there's no hidden tasks here so to speak. From a time standpoint, I'm asking you for this time and I will confine my ask of your time to this commitment.

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Monique Childress 35:57

Yeah, because the strategic planning process, it could take a while there is, of course, some ways for small organizations, maybe they just take a weekend so they really knock everything out. But for a comprehensive strategic planning process, you're looking at anywhere between like five and nine weeks, maybe shorter, maybe longer. When people see that timeline is like, Oh, my goodness, we're gonna be like, what? For how long? That's the length of the engagement, it's not necessarily the amount of effort that's needed for each and every stakeholder. That's where that project manager, facilitator, those two heads really play into each other of is really the consultants role to take the organization through that process, while managing the different stakeholders that are participating and being upfront with the client around. These are the types of people that will need to help us make decisions, they need to be aware that we'll need X amount of time from them and if they can commit to that, then they should be on this decision making team. If they can't commit to that, then they can be made aware. That's really where you see some hurdles, we can't get on anyone's calendar to make decisions and this is a pre-pandemic or during the pandemic. You just have to be upfront with the client about what the expectations are so that we can just select the right folks to be part of the process, but also be inclusive of everyone and respectful of everyone's time.



Jared Simmons 37:37

Well said, I appreciate you walking through that with people because I don't think we always have a full appreciation for how strategic planning works. The actual nuts and bolts of how this actually happens. I think there's this viewpoint that you get some people in a room, put some post-its on a wall and then that's it. It's the day to day blocking and tackling of change management, relationship management, stakeholder management, clarifying decision rights, and following the data and all those things behind the scenes that really make what you do so valuable to your clients.



Monique Childress 38:15

There's a lot of behind the scenes work, there's a lot of conversation, so that once the plan is developed, everyone has had some type of role in it. It's not new. It's not a surprise. You've mentioned, the decision rights, we already know for these three to five goals, who has responsibilities within those goals, who's accountable for them, and we can get started right away versus if you do have that; now I use sticky notes, but it's across multiple sessions. But if you do have that, take one Saturday, take one weekend approach. It's really only those that are available to show up or those that were invited. Whatever comes out of that one session is then presented to everyone as this is the way forward. There's probably questions about where this came from. Why wasn't I included? Why don't we have something else? There's just a lot of questions that will come out of a process like that. There are some organizations that are smaller that are newer that can't really bring on an external consultant at the time or maybe this is just their first process and they need to get something down. There is value in doing that shorter way, shorter approach, that template based approach. Like I said, when you're doing a comprehensive process, there's a lot of buy-ins that needs to really occur across the process to really make it successful. This is why I mentioned the process is so much more important, but also I think valuable to the client than the actual deliverable itself.



Jared Simmons 40:05

Well said, it makes such a difference in terms of innovation and the organization's ability to innovate. Strong strategic planning process gets you off on the right foot and allows you to make sure you have the capability and the capacity to actually execute on the mission, vision, and values that you've got for the organization. The way you go about it is really powerful. It's also something that the nonprofit space could use more of. One last question for you, before I let you go, I want to know if you have any advice for innovators?



Monique Childress 40:40

I think whether you're a consultant or a staff member, board member, leader, one big piece of advice is just to keep asking questions, keep maintaining that curiosity. Really just to one, always make sure that everyone is clear about why we're doing what we're doing. You have the mission and the vision established but if you think about the number of new staff members, new volunteers, new board members, new partners, a lot of opportunities that way to really think about and act on, because like I said, innovation is really just about a new way of doing something. It's not just one big aha moment. It's not one new shiny piece of technology or

anything like that. It's really about understanding what our strengths are, what the opportunities are for us to explore and to lead and how we can go about doing it. Just keep asking questions, keep talking to people to understand what the needs are for the populations that you're serving, so just keep talking.



Jared Simmons 41:59

Keep the lines of communication open. That's well said. I really appreciate you taking the time to join us today and to share your thoughts. Innovation in the nonprofit space is a passion area of mine. I know that the for profit world gets a lot of the attention when you talk about innovation, but in terms of what people are accomplishing with limited resources, and limited budgets, and small teams, in the nonprofit world, the lessons to be learned about innovation from the nonprofit world are endless.



Monique Childress 42:32

Absolutely. I completely agree.



Jared Simmons 42:34

Thank you so much for joining. It was a pleasure, as always. I always enjoy our conversations. Good to talk to you again and looking forward to the next time.



Monique Childress 42:42

Same here. Thank you for inviting me on the podcast. Also I really enjoy our conversations and looking forward to just continuing to work with these nonprofit organizations as they try to innovate their way to impact.



Jared Simmons 42:58

Thank you so much for your time.



Monique Childress 43:00

Okay.



Jared Simmons 43:01

All right. Take care.





Jared Simmons 43:07

We'd love to hear your thoughts about this week's show. You can drop us a line on Twitter @outlastllc, or follow us on LinkedIn where we're @outlastconsulting. Until next time, keep innovating! Whatever that means.