

The best finance professionals are passionate business partners who are equally motivated by desire to change the world

You know that sensation when finger nails are dragged down the length of a blackboard or someone cutting their food scratches the plate with their knife? Well, the term 'back office' has the same effect on me! Too frequently accountants working in charities are played down and labelled as an insignificant part of the operation. 'Back office' has connotations of bureaucracy, of paper pushing, of being 'less than'. It sets my teeth on edge. I hate it!

There is no doubt there we do need controls, processing and data management. I'm not advocating that these things are abandoned. These are necessary elements of stewardship but we desperately need to change the record. Particularly in financially constrained times, when funds from all sources are harder to come by and the pressure to do more with less is huge – we need to recognise and fully utilise what our finance professionals can offer us. The sweet spot for charity finance comes from treating finance as an enabler for the cause. And that sweet spot is achieved by investment in the leadership skills of your finance professionals - not from putting them in a box.

The best finance professionals are embedded in the cause. They are passionate business partners who are equally motivated by desire to change the world. Let's face it why else would you choose to join a charity or social organisation when your accounting skills could earn you significantly more in another sector?

Together with CASS and Sayer Vincent CFG run a modular course called Inspiring Financial Leadership. In it we focus on enhancing a range of leadership skills which enable finance professionals to hone their communication, adaptability, influence and flexibility. These breakfast sessions blend academic frameworks, coaching and listening to the experiences of sector leaders/experts with collaborative learning and peer networking. The course is structured with blocks of time between each module to allow for practical application and learning through experience. I am delighted that the course has been continuously successful and look forward to welcoming the next cohort in Oct 2017.

Next time you have the urge to talk about your finance professionals as 'the back office' ask yourself what you really want. Are you seeking a bureaucratic, administrative heavy compliance function or are you seeking to change the world? My guess it is the later, so why not make all parts of your charity optimum and invest in inspiring your finance leaders?

Caron Bradshaw is Chief Executive of Charity Finance Group, Cass CCE runs the Financial Leadership programme in conjunction with CFG. For more information on this course, please contact events@cfg.org.uk