



Championing the Entrepreneurial Spirit

The Edward Lowe Foundation (<http://www.edwardlowe.org>) was created by Ed and Darlene Lowe in 1985 to “champion the entrepreneurial spirit.” Headquartered near Cassopolis, Michigan, the foundation works with entrepreneur support organizations nationwide to encourage peer learning among second-stage business owners. Before his death in 1995, Ed Lowe, the creator of Kitty Litter, had become an advocate for entrepreneurship as the key to the success of the free-enterprise system.

As an operating foundation, the Edward Lowe Foundation pursues its mission in a different way than traditional foundations do. Instead of providing grants, the foundation provides services. Instead of providing money directly, the foundation gives its time and its expertise by developing and implementing programs.

Programs

- *PeerSpectives™ Roundtables* . . . help second-stage business owners, CEOs and presidents learn from each other to grow their companies.
- *Companies to Watch™* . . . celebrates second-stage companies for their achievements, products or processes, or significant potential “worth watching.”
- *YourEconomy* . . . an online resource center that enables visitors to take a closer look at business activity in their local communities—and across the country (<http://www.youreconomy.org>).
- *PeerSpectives™ Leader Retreats at Big Rock Valley* . . . use the power of peer learning in a natural, reflective environment at the foundation’s 2,500-acre rural retreat facility to help entrepreneurs see their companies for all they are and all they can be.

Roundtables for Not-for-Profit Chief Executives

The foundation is cooperating in PeerSpectives Roundtables, comprised of not for-profit chief executives and community leaders, in order to learn more about their impact on the entrepreneurial community. A healthy not-for-profit sector improves the overall quality of communities and industries, which contributes to a healthier environment for entrepreneurship and the growth of second-stage companies. Chief executives of not-for-profit organizations and community leaders need to think about their organizations in new and creative ways just as second-stage business owners do.

The PeerSpectives Roundtables bring together executive directors, CEOs, presidents of not-for-profit organizations, and community leaders to discuss leadership challenges in a structured and confidential setting. These roundtables are professionally facilitated, using a proven process that insures a balanced discussion that is not dominated by any one issue or individual.

These meetings occur at least monthly, and allow each participant the opportunity to discuss their most pressing leadership and organizational issues with a most trusted source—their peers.

Over time, roundtable participants find new and innovative solutions to tackle tough problems, enhance their decision making and leadership skills, and build valuable supportive relationships with their peers.

The Edward Lowe Foundation, based on its many years of conducting PeerSpective Roundtables for second stage business owners, has developed evaluation tools to demonstrate the value of peer learning. These evaluation instruments are applied to non-profit peer to peer roundtables to demonstrate their value to both non-profit executives and their boards.

Issues Considered at Not-for-Profit CEO Roundtables

For the Organization

Sustainability Leading to Growth
Mission
Funding
Membership Retention
Governance
Entrepreneurial Spirit
Efficiency and Innovation of Operations
Government Relations
Donor Relations

For the CEO

Isolation
Decision Making
Board Development
Compensation Issues
Entrepreneurial Thinking
Attracting and Retaining
Staff and Volunteers
Legal, Accounting/Finance
For-Profit Subsidiaries

For More Information

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