

A Knowledge Philanthropist's Story

Blog
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This blog post is the second in a series of success stories featured in our [2012 Annual Report](#).

By Kevin Ronaghan, Vantage Point knowledge philanthropist

Vivian Smith's work as a knowledge philanthropist was not something she sought out; rather, it found her. "It was in the days when Vantage Point was still known as Volunteer Vancouver," she recalls. "I was co-volunteering with one of their employees on a committee of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. She told me that her organization was looking for volunteer facilitators for its board development program, and thought I would be well suited for the role."

Once that initial connection was made, Vivian's passion for training and facilitation quickly took hold, and her contributions grew in scope and responsibility. Following her work in the board development program, she became a knowledge expert for the fundraising component of Vantage Point's Leaders Lab. Her success in that role gave her the confidence to accept an invitation to lead Governance Lab in the Fraser Valley - a role she continues today.

Vivian relates a story about the 2012 Governance Lab that speaks to its positive impact. "One of the organizations in attendance had formed twenty five years ago. A number of the founders were still on the board and new challenges were on the horizon. The executive director, who was relatively new to her position, clearly understood change was required. Although the board agreed, its members weren't sure which changes were appropriate, or how they could be implemented."

"Every month, the executive director and two board members came and soaked up new information. They asked tough questions and reached out to fellow participants for support. I really saw this group blooming and learning, and felt so privileged to be part of their progress. I feel that the organization will be stronger as a result of their efforts, and their constituents will benefit in the long run."

Since her girlhood, Vivian has had an overwhelming desire to be of service. Her work with Vantage Point has certainly fed that desire. "It has provided the opportunity to share my knowledge, passion and enthusiasm for my work and for the work of the non-profit sector," she says. "To know that one person, one board may have benefitted from my contribution makes it all worthwhile."

"It's been a great honour to work with the employees at Vantage Point," she continues. "They've supported me every step of the way. My advice to anyone considering an opportunity to be a knowledge philanthropist is: just try it. Every time you 'pay it forward' with gifts of your time and expertise, you will take so much away in return."

Want to build a mission-driven board? Learn more about how [Governance Lab](#) can take you there.