

Left: Jane Van De Velde ready to teach Reiki I for Healthcare Professional at Elmhurst Hospital.
Right: TRSP class materials.

Key Elements in Creating a Reiki Nonprofit

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Introduction

There are many ways to share and practice Reiki. Some of us keep Reiki very personal and use it primarily for self-healing, or we may offer Reiki to family, friends and pets. Some are Reiki volunteers in community settings, e.g., hospice organizations, nursing homes, hospitals and cancer support centers. We set up private Reiki practices, host Reiki shares and teach classes. We may seek new and creative ways to bring the gift of Reiki to the greater community.

Five years ago, my own Reiki journey took an unexpected direction. I was guided to create a nonprofit organization called The Reiki Share Project. At the beginning, my learning curve was straight up and there were moments of doubt and uncertainty. However, over the years, I have gained many personal and professional insights, and learned some valuable lessons. I have discovered a number of key elements that have been critical to the success of The Reiki Share Project. In sharing these elements, I hope to inform and inspire others as they manifest their own Reiki dreams.

Passion

The first key element is passion or devotion for your work, a concept that is reflected in the Reiki Principles. I am both passionate and devoted to Reiki, which has transformed my life in many unforeseen ways. I am also passionate about service to others and making a difference in people's lives, which comes from my nursing background.

In the fall of 2008, I knew that I wanted to do something more meaningful with my Reiki practice but I was not sure what that was. A series of synchronous events then occurred, which laid my path before me. A colleague casually said to me one day, "Why don't you set up a Reiki nonprofit organization?" as though it was the easiest thing to do. I had no idea what she was talking about. Soon after, a name literally dropped into my consciousness—"The Reiki Share Project." Next, *Reiki News Magazine* published an article about Reiki Rays of Hope for Caregivers, Inc. titled, "Teaching Reiki to Caregivers" (Winter 2008), and I realized that it was possible to set up a Reiki nonprofit. After that, events unfolded very



Left: TRSP partners with these community organizations.
Right: TRSP Reiki Master Teachers.



quickly. I met Lisa Wolkow who partnered with me in founding The Reiki Share Project (TRSP). By June 2009, TRSP was incorporated as an official nonprofit organization in the state of Illinois. Lisa and I worked together for a year before she moved out of state.

I believe that my passion, devotion and belief in the power of Reiki opened me to new possibilities. But I had to pay attention to these potentials and then take action.

Purpose

The next key element is to define or describe your purpose. What do you hope to accomplish? One of our first tasks with TRSP was to develop our vision and mission statements. Vision and mission statements can be applicable for many kinds of endeavors. Taking time to reflect upon what you want to do and who you want to serve can be helpful in giving some structure to your efforts. You want your project to be both realistic and manageable in the beginning stages.

A vision statement expresses an organization's overall goal and reason for existence and reflects the big picture. A mission statement is action oriented. It describes what you or your organization is going to do to realize the vision and defines who you are going to serve.

The Reiki Share Project's Vision Statement

An innovative leader, The Reiki Share Project empowers individuals to participate in their own healing process; integrates the practice of Reiki into health care systems, community-based organizations, and emergency management services; and fosters a caring and supportive wellness community.

Our dream was to raise awareness about the healing value of Reiki both for individuals and within health care settings. This statement also contains key words that reflect our values—leadership, empowerment, healing and wellness.

The Reiki Share Project's Mission Statement

The Reiki Share Project is dedicated to providing Reiki classes to groups of individuals and caregivers facing serious illness, disability or trauma. Through our classes and community outreach programs, we teach and support Reiki, a complementary healing practice that facilitates health and well-being through self-treatment and treatment of others.

Our mission statement turns our vision into action by stating that our primary purpose is to teach classes. It defines the population that we seek to serve and includes a very basic definition of Reiki.

Planning and Implementation

My partner and I began this phase by reviewing our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges—also known as a SWOC analysis. This is a strategic planning tool that is used in many professional settings. In considering our project, we came up with the following:

Strengths (internal)

1. Strong combined background and experience in Reiki practice, program development, teaching, public speaking, writing, and nonprofit administration
2. Established roots and connections in the Chicago area with health care and community organizations

3. Shared passion for our mission

Weaknesses (internal)

1. Need for initial financing for start-up costs
2. No experience in start-up entrepreneurial ventures
3. Occasional moments of doubt

Opportunities (external)

1. Increased visibility for Reiki in the media and a growing market for CAM therapies
2. Increasing number of integrative health care models, e.g., Planetree
3. Reiki Rays of Hope: established and successful model of a Reiki nonprofit organization with a similar mission and target demographic

Challenges (external)

1. Economic situation (2009) affecting funding for nonprofits
2. Lack of standardization in the practice and teaching of Reiki
3. Somewhat limited scientific research base for Reiki

The SWOC analysis was an important part of our decision-making process. We needed to determine if we wanted to commit our time and resources to a seemingly daunting project. We weighed our options, did some soul searching and decided to “Go For It.”

The next phase was the actual work of setting up the organization, which involved seeking professional services; incorporating as a nonprofit; writing bylaws; setting up a data base, bank account and telephone service; and designing a website. We also applied for tax exempt status by submitting the 1023 form to the Internal Revenue Service.

People and Personal Relationships

People and personal relationships are important when starting any kind of business or organizing an event. Using good communication skills can be essential to the success of your project, e.g., being able to clearly articulate your mission and vision; being a good listener; and being mindful about giving people both constructive and positive feedback. Expressing gratitude to others also helps to nurture personal relationships.

Taking a leadership role with a complex project requires skillful interaction with many different people. Sometimes there may be differing opinions, perspectives or working styles. There may even be unresolvable conflicts. My intention in these situations



TRSP Level I Reiki class at LivingWell in Geneva, IL.

is to always resolve differences peacefully. I have also learned to be more discerning in choosing the people with whom I work.

In the early days of TRSP, we required expertise on a number of levels to get the organization up and running. We needed a lawyer, accountant, website designer, Board of Directors, Advisory Council and Reiki Master Teachers. We were very fortunate that so many stepped forward to support TRSP. I have maintained good relationships with many of these people five years later.

Programs

The primary mission of TRSP is to teach Reiki classes, so the development of a high quality Level I student manual and curriculum was a priority. My vision was that our classes would be offered by health care and other community based organizations. We put significant thought and planning into the initial version of our 2010 student manual. In 2013, we revised this manual and had it professionally bound and printed.

Reiki is taught in many different ways. We do not have a national or international set of standards for teaching the three levels of Usui Reiki as do other complementary healing practices. My own first Level I class was taught from a very metaphysical perspective, and I knew that I could not offer that type of Reiki class in a public setting such as a health care organization. I have approached this issue by teaching what I call “nuts & bolts” Reiki.

TRSP’s Level I class gives our students the basic information and hands-on skills they need to begin a successful Reiki self-care

practice. Our material is very straightforward, and there is a lot of hands-on practice time during our classes. Our goal is for students to leave feeling confident in their ability to connect to Reiki in meaningful ways on a daily basis. Our student manual helps us to achieve this goal.

Another key program element is our Reiki Master Teacher training and orientation program, which was modeled after the Reiki Rays of Hope program. All of our teachers take this training before teaching classes for TRSP. Our objective is to standardize the way that our classes are taught.

In this training, we review teaching strategies and classroom management with larger classes. Our classes often have between 10–15 students, which are sometimes bigger than our Reiki Master Teachers are accustomed to teaching. During orientation, we review the TRSP student manual in detail so that the teachers have an opportunity to ask questions, and discuss and clarify different perceptions about Reiki practice. All students learn the same Reiki attunement. They are then asked to observe a TRSP class before teaching their own class. This model has been very successful and helps to establish credibility for our organization.

Professionalism

There are a number of key elements to cultivating a professional public perception of Reiki as we move our practice into health care and community organizations. Our goal is for Reiki to be recognized as a credible healing practice.

Language: I encourage students and practitioners to develop Reiki “Sound Bites”—succinct statements that define Reiki and can be used repeatedly. In describing Reiki, I emphasize relaxation, stress reduction and balance. I focus on Reiki’s simplicity—offered through light touch or hands just above the body. I talk about Reiki’s ability to bring people to a place of feeling calm and peaceful. I keep my descriptions very simple. I always refer to Reiki as a complementary healing practice, not alternative. Alternative implies “instead of.” Complementary means “in addition to.”

Know your practice: It is important for us to be students of Reiki and have a working knowledge of current practice trends, research and Reiki literature.

Marketing Materials: Develop marketing materials that look professional, e.g., logo, website, brochures and letterhead. For TRSP, I have marketing folders that I use when approaching new venues with proposals for classes. These packets include our brochure; my business card; information about TRSP and

our classes; and pertinent articles about Reiki research and other programs. These packets have been very helpful in promoting our classes.

TRSP as a nonprofit organization: Being a nonprofit lends credibility to our mission, vision and programs. Doors have opened for TRSP that might not open for solo practitioners.

Partnerships

In setting up classes for The Reiki Share Project, we actively seek partnerships with other organizations. Our model is for the organization to advertise the class, register students and provide classroom space. The Reiki Share Project provides the Reiki Master Teachers and class materials.

Our first partnership was with Wellness House, a nonprofit organization that provides programs for people dealing with cancer. I began volunteering there in 2006 offering Reiki sessions on a weekly basis. Wellness House was the first venue that we approached in 2010. My personal relationship with the Clinical Director, Lisa Kolavennu, was essential to scheduling our first Reiki class.

In the past five years, we have partnered with other organizations to provide classes on an ongoing basis: Wellness Place, LivingWell Cancer Resource Center, Elmhurst Memorial Hospital, JourneyCare and the Chicago Botanic Garden.

These partnerships have been important to our success as an organization. Other elements that I have previously described have also contributed to these partnerships—defining our purpose, good planning, developing quality programs, professionalism and nurturing personal relationships.

Patient and Persistence

In the past five years, I have learned that opportunities can sometimes manifest very quickly. At other times, it may take a year or more for plans and proposals to come to fruition. I have experienced both scenarios.

Patience is required when approaching health care or community based organizations with proposals for Reiki classes. JourneyCare provides hospice & palliative care services and is one of our newest class sites. I sent a proposal packet to the volunteer coordinator over two years ago. Despite follow-up phone calls and emails, the packet sat on her desk. It was discovered several months later by her replacement, Kathleen Recchia, Director of Innovative Services, who contacted me in January 2013. Kathleen was very enthusiastic about our classes, which she wanted to offer to staff and volunteers. The first JourneyCare class was finally taught in late November 2013 with ongoing classes scheduled through May 2014. After my initial meeting with Kathleen, it


took almost a year for these classes to get organized and scheduled. JourneyCare also applied for and received grant money from a local community foundation to fund the Reiki classes. This process took time.

One of the keys to success is finding that one right person within the organization who will be your advocate, who believes in the value of Reiki. Again, it is important to cultivate personal relationships. Health care professionals and administrative staff are very busy with many day-to-day responsibilities. A Reiki class is probably not at the top of their priority list even though it is at the top of yours.

This is why persistence is important. Not every proposal is going to be successful, but gentle persistence can pay off at times with courteous follow-up emails and phone calls. When and if the time is right, the door will fly open.

Summary

These key elements can be applicable to any kind of Reiki business or program that you can envision. Set your intention, work hard and trust that Reiki will guide you to manifest your dreams.

Five years ago, I could not have imagined where The Reiki Share Project would lead me. Starting this nonprofit was truly a leap of faith for me. I have met and worked with so many dedicated Reiki professionals; had the opportunity to share the gift of Reiki with people dealing with serious illnesses; and discovered new abilities within myself that were simply lying dormant. It has been a joyful five years of personal growth for me. 

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