

# Being and Doing

*Kim Scott*



An essay contribution to  
*Conversation 2015*

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## Participant Bio



**Kim Scott**

President & CEO, Trillium Family Services

Kim Scott is responsible for providing executive leadership for all Trillium program operations. He provides direct supervision to the organization's Chief Executive Officers, and leadership in the development of organizational policy and procedure, compliance with national accrediting bodies, and program and business development activities. Kim is committed to the health and well-being of Oregon's children and families, and has dedicated his life's work to making the world a safer, more supportive place for ALL people to thrive.

Mr. Scott provides statewide leadership in the development of intensive treatment services that are family focused and integrated with local communities and planning structures. He serves on the Advisory Board of the American Association of Children's Residential Centers, on the Strategic Planning Committee of the National Alliance of Children and Families, on the Board of Directors at Concordia University, and on the Board of Trustees at Helping Men Heal. Kim is also peer faculty at the National Alliance of Strong Communities and Families in their Residential Treatment Transformation Initiative, and has been invited to participate in the Building Bridges Summit sponsored by SAMHSA, as well as being actively involved with the Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs.

Mr. Scott started his career as a childcare worker at Waverly Children's Home in 1978 and he became the Residential Services Coordinator in 1983. In 1985, he moved to Alaska, where he served as Detention Unit Leader for the Department of Health and Social Services in Juneau and as youth counselor at Johnson Youth Center, also in Juneau, Alaska. Prior to joining Trillium Family Services, Mr. Scott served as Associate Director of the Children's Farm Home in Corvallis, Oregon. In this role, he was responsible for directing all the residential care and treatment services operations and supervised coordinators responsible for managing residential, community-based and clinical services program operations. Mr. Scott received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Counseling Education from Columbia Christian College in 1980. He received a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Alaska Southeast in August 1995.

Mr. Scott has presented at conferences for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), Oregon's Children & Adolescent Residential Psychiatric Programs (CHARPP), the Council on Accreditation (COA), and the University of Southern Florida's Research & Best Practice conference and has provided quality assurance, accreditation and electronic record consultation for mental health agencies in Oregon and Alaska.

Over the past few years, Kim Scott and his team at Trillium have adopted a trauma-informed lens to the work of the organization. Understanding the profound impact that trauma and stress have on individuals, families, organizations, systems, communities, and all human systems has led Trillium down a path toward creating a network of trauma-informed community partners determined to change the conversation about people and problems from, "What's wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?" Trillium's "Keep Oregon Well" campaign was launched in 2015, with initiatives involving poverty, equity, inclusion, and safety in the pipeline for the coming year.



## Being and Doing

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As a leader in the field of human service, the question of “why we do what we do” is becoming paramount to me. On a daily basis I find myself confronted by a myriad of choices; choices that cause me to pause and consider the right path, or to look at issues through two lenses -- one of being, and one of doing.

My experience tells me that there is an order of magnitude here and that, of course, if we are in the right frame of being, then wise action must follow. My experience also tells me that I’m not the only individual in the human service industry that is struggling with the integration, or balancing of being and doing. Author Stephen R. Covey, through numerous articles and books, has encouraged us as organizational leaders to “start with the end in mind” and has reminded us that “The main thing is keeping the main thing the main thing.” It seems like sage advice, particularly in social purpose organizations where mission and vision are supposed to be the things that drive achievement, perspective, purpose and, ultimately, impact. I also believe that Covey is warning us that the core and fundamental values and vision that are central to any organization’s purpose can be lost through an over-emphasized internal focus, distraction, disruption, or crisis more easily than we might think, and that losing our sense of purpose may lead to our organizations becoming irrelevant.

### **How we stop seeing the forest because of all those trees**

I think that drifting off of our intentional pathway happens in a variety of ways, but our focus on organizational performance is reminiscent of the golfer or tennis player who is so caught up in the mechanics of their swing that they forget the joy of the game. In the past few years I have had many opportunities to connect with other leaders of social purpose organizations and have walked away from those conversations with a keen awareness that many of us talk about what we do in terms of the types of programs and services offered, financial performance, size of budgets, number of donors, etc., but we actually talk very little about what we were *meant* to do in terms of mission, vision and the social impact we are supposedly striving for in the first place. Are we losing the joy of making things better?

### **A story of success?**

When I first became the CEO of Trillium Family Services in 2004, there was great pressure from my board, colleagues, and the industry, to start viewing the organization’s success through more of a business lens -- and it made sense. Trillium had always been a significant part of Oregon’s service structure for children and families, but financially we

had always struggled with needing to raise significant funds privately in order to maintain a balanced budget. Great disruption was headed our way, as Oregon was implementing a major restructuring of the children's mental health system.

The "Children's Change Initiative" would move the children's system from a direct contract methodology where the state purchased services through a statewide model, to a regionalized managed care model where services would be purchased by managed health organizations on a fee-for-service basis. The old model had been problematic -- the state had never paid rates that covered our true cost of care -- but the model was predictable, and the contracts with the state were virtually guaranteed to providers, simply by virtue of having been a provider in that system and not because of our overall impact.

Implemented in 2004-2005, the Children's Change initiative had a huge impact on services for youth and families. It focused on consumer choice for the type of care needed, where care would be provided, and how long care would last. The initiative incentivized local service options, prevention, and community-based services. Gone were the days of consumers accepting any opening in inpatient care, regardless of location or youth languishing in inpatient care long past what was clinically indicated, or consumers having to "stick with" a provider even when the services weren't effective. Trillium Family Services, not unlike other providers, struggled with the new model, and in one year under the new initiative, the organization had operating losses approaching seven million dollars.

### **Being and doing...**

As a new CEO, and having just experienced the most significant loss in the history of the organization, I took things into my own hands and decided that I needed to do something! In a decisive manner I set the tone for turning around the organization. My focus was clearly on the financial domain, since our survival and long term viability depended on our getting that right. I approached the board and told them to hold me accountable to the following things:

- 1) Make the organization live within its contracts including,
- 2) The funding of depreciation and
- 3) Use private fundraising for innovation not subsidizing programs that could not pay for themselves.

I then began the process of providing visible, focused leadership by daily monitoring of what I thought were key metrics. I would call the billing office every day and ask, "How much did we collect today?" I would check daily for inpatient census, referrals and upcoming discharges. I would routinely review productivity ratios of clinical staff.

As part of the new emphasis on financial disciplines, we began closing those programs that were deemed “poor performers,” from a financial perspective. In all, we cut 3.3 million dollars in service contracts and cut over 200 jobs.

In this process, we were beginning to create an organizational narrative that emphasized a, “No margin, no mission” mantra.

Over the next two years, this financial/business approach to managing a social purpose organization resulted in the financial outcome we had envisioned. In 2010, the organization generated 3 million dollars in operational resources and I set off on the national conference event with a presentation entitled, “No Margin, No Mission.”

### Upon further review...

In retrospect, I’m not surprised by the financial outcome we achieved at Trillium Family Services. After all, we anticipated and focused on a certain vision or narrative for the organization and had the incentive to produce results. The major incentive being organizational dividend, which is an achievement I am grateful for. However, there was great cost to the organization in creating a transactional focus and culture, and much like the aforementioned golfer or tennis player, losing the joy of what we do and why we do it in the first place.

Our “No margin, no mission” approach had led to an organizational focus that was almost entirely about the internal operations of the organization and the financial results we wanted to achieve. Along the way, facilities eroded, staff development and growth were neglected, morale suffered and, in general, the organization had become traumatized; not so much by the financial crisis itself, but by the approach taken in, “turning the organization around.”

Finally, in 2012, the organization was rocked by the suicide of an adolescent girl in one of our residential programs. Review of the conditions leading up-to this tragic event left me disheartened and ultimately feeling responsible. My findings indicated that the staff had become disengaged and discouraged, that training was not sufficient to meet the needs of the youth being served, and that fears about job security and workplace conditions overshadowed the passion for making a difference in the lives of those we serve. Again, in retrospect, we had created the condition for staff and program leaders to feel this way. I knew things had to change, and I knew I had to change.

### Being and Doing

It is hard for me to separate the true “turnaround” of the organization with my own personal turnaround. I had to get to a right sense of being and I needed help. The help came in multiple ways.

My dear colleagues and international practice gurus, Ken & Gary Hubbell, helped me think about the “why” behind the work I do, and they helped me view the world through a social impact lens. They also helped me to see that I loved my job, but helped me to get to a point where I had to consider whether or not there was love in my work. My experience at the Harvard Human Services Summit, and Ron Heifetz, exposed me to adaptive leadership and the need to embrace disequilibrium as an opportunity for growth and learning. Partnerships with innovative organizations like Concordia University taught me about the importance of focusing on building a great community and not focusing entirely on building a great organization.

Perhaps the greatest lesson learned, and one that feels sustainable for the long-haul, is my personal commitment and the organization’s commitment to the Sanctuary Model. The Sanctuary Model is a clinical approach, organizational development approach, and a model for social movement. Sanctuary is a trauma informed model that considers the profound impact that trauma and stress have on individuals, families, organizations, systems, communities, and essentially all human systems. The model stresses a strength-based approach that moves the conversation about people and problems from, “What’s wrong with you?” to “What has happened to you?”

A cornerstone of the Sanctuary Model, and a touch point for me and the organization, is the 7 Commitments:

1. **Growth & Change** (vision at the heart of innovation)
2. **Open Communication** (maintain flow of ideas)
3. **Democracy** (participation & diversity)
4. **Non-Violence** (safety & trust)
5. **Emotional Intelligence** (pattern recognition)
6. **Social Learning** (constantly learning from failure)
7. **Social Responsibility** (common goals & common focus)

For me, the 7 Commitments have served as a guide or compass that helps keep me in a state of being that, in my opinion, is appropriate for the work that I have dedicated my life to. When viewing these commitments, I don’t know how one could read them and experience them without thinking of broader social issues, such as equity, inclusion, social justice, poverty and other social determinants that impact our health, wellness and welfare.

As the leader of one organization, I am called now to make a difference in terms of social impact and moving the needle on true social change, and that is now the organization’s narrative. I also know that the problems I have identified cannot be solved by any one organization or system, so I am also called to collaborate and partner in ways that build capacity and close critical gaps in services that support our most vulnerable citizens. This

approach has been disruptive, daunting, and has forced me to be a voice and, perhaps, a thought leader, as it relates to the needs of children, families and communities. In some ways, it has been the scariest time of my life; unquestionably, it has been the most rewarding.

And, oh, by-the-way, this focus on personal intention, social impact, and changing the world, has not damaged the organization financially. Our revenues have doubled since those dark days of 2007 and we now have more organizational capacity than ever to really make a difference.

Being and doing...how I love this work!

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversations* are one central element of our work. GHC was founded on the belief that every individual and each organization is capable of bringing about profound change in the world. We are personally and professionally committed to learning and, by choice, place ourselves where we can partner with like-spirited leaders, engaged continually in a process of discovery to deepen presence, impact, and value. We seek to be in the community of wise change makers.

These *Conversations*—and our client work in planning, strategy, philanthropy, and coaching—are all designed to strengthen adaptive organizations for inevitable change and greater impact.



**Planning • Strategy • Philanthropy • Coaching**

***In order to strengthen adaptive organizations for inevitable change and greater impact***

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