Randy Jordan is CEO of Hope *worldwide*, an international charity based in Wayne, Pennsylvania. Randy elected to leave a partnership with a Washington, D.C.–based health care specialty law firm to begin his career of service to the poor and needy. After ten years serving in different roles in the organization, he was appointed CEO.

Growth River: To start with, could you take us on a brief historical journey of HOPE *worldwide*?

Randy Jordan: In 1991, the family of churches that sponsor HOPE *worldwide* decided that the money they were collecting for the poor needed to be administered through a special-purpose organization to really focus on charity work. So HOPE *worldwide* was formed. The idea grew quickly and pervasively at a grass roots level. We found ourselves in more than 60 countries—or, as we like to say, on every inhabited continent of the world. Then a series of events in our sponsoring churches caused our funding levels to drop significantly within a short period of time. So that required a period of restructuring in 2003 and some very lean times. We successfully weathered that storm, our founders decided to retire, and I was asked to take the position of CEO, which happened to coincide with the whole global financial crisis. So there we were, into the second generation of leadership at HOPE *worldwide*, needing to build a new executive team, get structured properly, and find our way back financially. That's when I brought in Tom Lombardi (of Growth River) to help us.

We've gone through a great deal of transition. We're now in 72 countries, we employ more than 2,000, and we have access to some 50,000 volunteers through our sponsoring churches. And it continues to grow.

Creating Clarity through Shared Language

GR: Has the introduction of business language and protocols into your nonprofit culture been helpful?

RJ: We were founded by people who come from the business world, so we had business principles within our thought processes. But as with many beginning companies with an entrepreneurial bent, there was a lot of instinctive behavior that was not formalized in terms of business plans and processes. So the adoption of commonly understood words and the development of a shared lexicon has been a powerful thing for our organization. It's a mechanism that allows us to speak a common language with each other about the way we do business. It has a powerful effect not just on the way we talk but on the way we think. And the fact that it relates to business has made our story easier to tell. When we talk about our work, corporate donors and business-minded people are able to relate more quickly to the way we do things.

GR: Would you say that the adoption of a shared language has helped you in the development and execution of your strategies?

RJ: Oh, absolutely. The big diagnosis for HOPE *worldwide* was that we lacked clarity, not so much in purpose but in roles and in the manner in which we do business. The common language has provided clarity in the way we communicate with each other. I recently spoke with a friend in a for-profit company that has adopted Growth River language, and I knew exactly what he was talking about. That alone demonstrates the power of those words.

The Enterprise Map & Defining Roles

GR: We're talking about the Growth River Glossary, which is one part of a larger tool kit. Another tool in that kit is the Enterprise Map. Could you describe what the Enterprise Map is and how you are using it to evolve HOPE *worldwide*?

RJ: I've described it to our team as a new style org chart. That's how I think about it. It has brought many benefits. First, simply creating the chart itself imposed a discipline on the organization that was lacking. Second, it captures every meaningful position within our organization. The preparation of it forced us to cover everything and to miss nothing. Third, creating the enterprise map forced us to assign responsibility for the things that we acknowledged were our core functions and lines of business. And, finally, it provided a very powerful tool to clarify roles and the interdependencies of roles. This provides a pathway for meaningful discussion and dispute resolution.

GR: Has the Enterprise Map helped you in your approach to tough people issues?

RJ: The map itself doesn't, but the clarity that it produces has caused under-the-table conflicts to surface. Because the map is so comprehensive, this is inescapable. It identifies the stakeholders on any given issue, so if you are going to address an issue, you can't overlook people. Yet while it may surface some conflict, because you have an effective tool for problem-solving it has the net effect of reducing the type of conflict that bogs down an organization. And because you've mapped out everybody's role, it makes it possible to avoid making unilateral decisions that catch part of your organization by surprise.

GR: Because the Enterprise Map is intertwined with defining everyone's role, would you say it is a tool for helping people develop in their roles?

RJ: It does help you understand which part of your team or which people on your team might benefit most from coaching or extra training.

GR: In that sense it provides a map for allocating resources most effectively for staff development?

RJ: Yes. It also illuminates the cycle of your business, and specifically how to identify the primary constraints to growth. That awareness is now built into the structure of your org chart, so you are always thinking about how to overcome constraints and move through the business process more quickly. And sometimes the primary constraint to growth can be a person that needs some help.

GR: How would you say the Enterprise Map has affected the leadership team's relationship with the board of directors?

RJ: The board's endorsement of the map was a strong statement. It brought clarity to the board's role, and empowered the executive team to move ahead. And it empowered the board chair to make it clear that he wanted the board to step back and the executive team to step up.

Executive Coaching and Organizational Restructuring

GR: What synergies have you found to exist between individual leadership coaching and the organizational restructuring work?

RJ: What I've found is that everybody—including me as CEO—learns through the process of creating a team and restructuring an organization. But as CEO you also need to discuss and test

what you're learning, *because you have the responsibility to lead*. In the strategic sessions we take off our titles and work together, which is a great experience, but when you walk out of the room you have to put the title back on. What coaching provides is the opportunity to get specific training and to discuss leadership dynamics that would not be appropriate for the room.

GR: When you go back in the room with all the new language, the Enterprise Map, and clarified accountabilities, do you find that the executive coaching strengthens your role?

RJ: That is how it has been for me. Through this process we have developed a system-of-roles, when before we had a system of personalities. When you realize that your contribution to the enterprise only occurs when you fully play out *your* role, you have to be prepared not just with your knowledge but, to use another Growth River term, your way-of-being. You're not going to get that from reading a book. Coaching provides you the opportunity to digest the ideas, to discuss them, and to have some trial and error in practicing them.

GR: That's the synergy we're out to achieve between coaching and leadership team alignment—

RJ: —and it has had dynamics beyond what I expected. Growth River has not been afraid to work with the whole person, not just the business person. So during the coaching process, there are times when we are discussing health and well-being, not just the daily business of HOPE *worldwide*.

GR: What other unexpected surprises or benefits have you experienced?

RJ: For one, I don't think I understood before that there can be an orderly, systematic way to confront and face uncomfortable topics within the normal course of business—as opposed to having some overwrought decision to confront and with great courage expose the elephant in the room. I just didn't realize that there were tools available that relate to business process and team development that would allow those things to be addressed naturally.

Another surprise is that I've always thought I was pretty clear thinker and communicator, and I've been surprised at how much I've had to learn. For example, we would talk about the need for clarity at HOPE *worldwide*, but left to myself I concluded that while that may be true, it wasn't really our problem. Not only was the lack of clarity true, but it was *the* problem.

You usually think of assertiveness as a characteristic of abrupt and insensitive people, but I've learned that one of the most insensitive things you can do is to be vague and unclear.

GR: Especially if you are trying to work with another human being to go somewhere together.

RJ: Exactly. I continue to find that these concepts and ideas are sustainable, and Monday morning is not just business as usual. These are principles that, if you work with them, will create profound changes in your organization. ♦