I have been the director of Melbourne Main Street for just over two months, and I am discovering a lot about myself, the city I live in and what it means to head an organization.

While there are many aspects of the job that you learn about and anticipate as part of the interviewing process, there are always those aspects that no one tells you about:

I didn't anticipate the deep sense of ownership I would feel over not just the organization, but the entire downtown area.

I did not anticipate that I would have trouble sleeping because of all the ideas and plans I want to implement.
I did not anticipate the energy I would feel from seeing community members, city officials, and board members working together to bring awareness and resources to an area of Melbourne that is the hub of community action.

To say the least, I have caught the entrepreneurial bug. A recent article in the "Washington Post" focused on Main Street businesses as entrepreneurial endeavors that are key for economic growth. Typically when we think of the word entrepreneur we think of tech start-ups or people who are creating new products, but a study from the National Bureau of Economic Research suggests that millennials have an expanded definition of what it means to be an entrepreneur.

Most have a strong desire to open up restaurants, retail shops, or other service oriented businesses on Main Streets. Main Streets provide an environment that allows small businesses to flourish. They provide a space for the community to connect, to make memories, to buy goods and services from their neighbors. There is no better example of shopping small or local than shopping at a Main Street business.

So, though I have only been in this role a short time, there are some key lessons I have learned:

• It is not a sprint it is a marathon. Main Street's approach is all about incremental success and I have to consistently remind myself of that. I am not expected to do everything in one day, or one month, or even one year. Pace yourself, ask for help, and think long-term. Doing this will not only allow you time to make well-informed decisions, but it sets the pace for a long journey.

• Build a support group for yourself. Being an executive director can be a lonely position, especially within non-profit organizations, which are often run by only one full-time person. Create a team of individuals you can turn to for support, who will listen when you are feeling unsure, people who will give you a pat on the back when you need one and who will tell you when you need to take a step back and reevaluate. Mentorship is crucial and should be made a priority.

• Take care of yourself and set boundaries. There is always going to be work to do, more you can do to promote your organization, but you have to set limits. A Meyer Foundation study found that executive directors stated that the biggest obstacle to achieving professional development and personal well-being was lack of time, not the funds to do it or the willingness. However, professional development and personal well-being are two characteristics that are key to preventing executive director burnout. Take time for yourself. Set limits on when you will check emails outside of work hours. Make a conscious effort to let go when you are not at work.

When you take care of yourself, it makes for a healthier organization and environment for the people it serves.

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