

1G - 230113

From: WRowan <[REDACTED]>

Date: Friday, January 13, 2023 at 10:06 AM

To: Adrian Haro <adrian@theworkerslab.com>, [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER]

Subject: Follow up to project meeting

Adrian,

I undertook to send over the five principles around which we are re-organizing things at this end to adapt to the extreme fragility of our operation as we prepare for further launches. It would be great if TWL could align the Design Sprint with our principles. Tangibly, they have produced some specific asks for you.

Before that, there's another challenge. I think we agreed a solution to this one. But want to be sure.

Once again, our meeting yesterday derailed after I asked why you were describing our launches, which require intense commitment from multiple local stakeholders, as "pilots". You did that several times after appearing in the meeting I'd set up with [REDACTED] on Tuesday.

My point led – once again – to you asserting that "your messaging is crap". Like your repeated trope about "people in philanthropy told me to avoid you" I have been unable to get to any actionable insight from these statements. When pressed yesterday you said "the messaging is all about you (Beyond Jobs) and what you need". It isn't. It's about the scale/challenges/categorization of non-standard workers in whichever area I'm addressing, and the path to public agencies launching alternative infrastructure.

We repeatedly seek feedback on everything we do from multiple stakeholders. I continue to be curious about whether our explanations are optimal for the constituencies we must win over. But ongoing amorphous criticism, however heartfelt, is just destabilizing and disrupting of an already perilous program. Looking at the agencies and funders who have supported us, and the press we have generated, our view here is the messaging is broadly OK. There are far, far, more pressing concerns.

Volatile behavior from TWL is now top of our risk log. On several occasions in 2022 you capriciously threatened to abruptly end the Design Sprint and this relationship. We all agree that it was a mistake for us to become financially dependent on TWL, but we would not have the momentum we're now enjoying if I had devoted energy to funder outreach in 2022. So, we are stuck in this discomforting vulnerability.

I don't doubt we all want this program to succeed. But I ask you to accept we have years of experience, thinking, and consultation around every aspect of this nuanced operation. Expecting us to cast off what we know in pursuit of whatever you are groping towards is unrealistic, stressful, and could kill the project.

It also stifles TWL's gains from this work. As an example, if you were to ask "why do you message like that?" rather than criticizing, you might enhance the transfer of learning from us to you. We are committed to that process as part of the Design Sprint. If TWL is to develop ongoing revenue from this sprint (we've discussed a "Red Hat" model) you should be picking our brains, not abusing our competence.

You made the point yesterday – if I understood correctly – that we don't need to like each other. I agree. Although we must look like we do in front of prospects, and we have to retain professional communication. This insight could be the key to our solution:

My suggestion yesterday was this: we have four cities in play. You have led on Chicago, by far the biggest. That makes it the easiest to launch, there will be many hundreds of millions of stimulus dollars. Only a fraction needs to be found to align with a flexible work platform.

Could you focus on driving Cook County to a launch in mid-2023. I will be on hand to advise or attend meetings if asked. But you determine the messaging, timetable, and shaping of proposals as you believe best. I will do the same in the cities where my groundwork was pivotal: primarily [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Where it's clear you add value on the West Coast I will ask you to attend meetings or advise. [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] will work across the whole sprint and become TWL's repository of learning which now has a control-group element.

I think you said Yes to this. Can you confirm that?

The five principles

I have explained several times how strapped we are on a minimalist team that was planning around a 6-month cycle that then lurched to a 3-month horizon (no funding to rely on after March). Our launches are more diverse tech. wise than expected. Groundwork in Long Beach is paying off just as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] start ramping up.

There are now so many points of vulnerability. To put it as bluntly as I can, we desperately need your help if we are to deliver on the opportunity we're facing in the next 6 months.

Hyper-frugality has had to be a core competency here for a long time. But we're now in a new era of it. To manage that, we have arranged ourselves around the 5 principles I laid out yesterday. Here they are with the specific asks they generate for TWL:

1) Meticulous launch research and recording of details is top priority (outside tech.)

Strategy, messaging, policy implications, all the enjoyable stuff in our remit has to go on the back burner. We need to systematically understand the needs of an array of stakeholders, mathematically not just verbally (it's all in the numbers) and ensure robust launches. Our ability to do this efficiently will determine success.

I would like to bring [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] up to speed on how to do this work, ensure we all give him the autonomy to find his own style/curiosity/authenticity around it, then get

him over to [REDACTED] initially for facetime with people we need. In later months I hope to see him leading on [REDACTED] launch.

I think we've agreed on this. But we have a track record of not understanding each other. So, can you confirm?

2) Our city stakeholders must experience first rate customer service and pacesetting.

You have in the past urged me to "slow down". That simply can't happen now. We have to produce documents, conduct interviews, and engage target prospects swiftly yet competently. Because our WIB directors all talk to each other, we must ensure each feels we are setting the pace with deliverables that merits the political – potentially financial – capital expended.

The concern here is that TWL and Beyond Jobs are very different in culture, worldview, values, and processes; united only by a shared commitment to worker empowerment. This schism is in danger of embarrassing us in front of our customers. As an example, you offered a proposal memo to [REDACTED] on Tuesday. I didn't think we were ready, but I don't want us to fall out in front of partners, so acquiesced. We could have had a more thorough memo after a pivotal conversation with [REDACTED].

The you-take-Chicago option (above) is the ask here.

3) Funder door-opening

I need to crank funder dialogues back up so we stop being dependent on TWL. It will be time-consuming, at the expense of launches, tech., and operations. The work is not in sharing our learning, it's getting through the door. TWL is much better placed to do this than I am. You have a dedicated fundraiser, multiple relationships, and a brand we can't match.

The ask: would TWL fully reach out to 10 agreed funders and ask if they would take a webinar about our learning on this program? Crucially, we have to be free to explain our journey, insights, and proposition our way. We will of course recognize the value of TWL's support.

I have asked for this in recent months and you have declined unless we agree to ditch our messaging and adopt a new slide deck and wording to be created by TWL's communications consultant. We will be invited to input into her thinking and fact check her output but, like her earlier attempt – which we all recognize was not a success – there would be one monolithic slidepack that dictates how we talk about our work. You have made this demand on several occasions.

On this side, we cannot agree to this. It stifles our value, authenticity, and unique experience while potentially tying us in knots when facing follow up questions.

So, it looks like I will have to initiate funder dialogues on top of everything else. There's a small pool of targets, so we will be competing for the same dollars. And they will know you.

Given the public announcements of our working together (something I would never deny), they are going to ask “why didn’t TWL introduce you to us?”. I can dissemble around “different viewpoints”, but if pressed, the truth above will out. I think that makes TWL look like it arrogantly micromanages partners. It does nothing to help with perceptions of us either. This is the bind I am in.

So the ask is: can you just put some weight behind asking your contacts around philanthropy to take a meeting with us. We will aim to educate them rather than blatantly pitching. TWL attendance is of course welcomed, but we need you to frame us as interesting people you identified, nurtured, and wish to see succeed, rather than a cowed team not able to speak for themselves.

4) WR back to the US

In our budgeting last fall, we discussed me coming back to work stateside for Feb./Mar./Apr. It is insanely risky to have the key person with knowledge of tech., launch requirements, and holder of key contacts, 5,000 miles and 8 time zones away.

The ask: I understand your board are not willing to fund this until one of our cities funds a launch manager of their own. I understand that view. But it is paralyzing our ability to plan and we know from countless experiences that being there in person is transformative in galvanizing prospects to move. [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] will be a good resource for them. But he can’t be expected to have my instincts, awareness of issues, or ability to prioritize possibilities for some time.

So, can we work on your board? I can draft a memo for you or even make a short presentation if appropriate. But we face a real risk of an overwhelming opportunity or problem flaring up that I would have seen coming if on the ground. (Not because I have any special abilities, just hard-won experience.)

5) Strategic relationship building

Endorsement and/or ongoing dialogue with a range of unions, thinktanks, academics, and lobby groups could add significant weight to what we are trying to do. They would also create a framework of encouragement for our city decision makers. [REDACTED] is going well. We would like more.

The ask: TWL can do this better than me. You will already know many of the targets. We need to try pushing them to blog about us, or otherwise tangibly give us some sort of pull quote that amounts to a range of parties saying “something like this (public infrastructure for non-standard work) needs to happen”.

Could you transfer time you are currently allocating to our routine research/update/proposal work on the West Coast to garnering some key endorsements, possibly to be unveiled when we go public on our launch timetables/

That's where we're at. I cannot overstate how precarious we currently are. If the asks above cause us to fall out again, it is honestly better that happens now than we experience a bout of recriminations later when we have embarrassed ourselves with cities or screwed up launches because we tried to be too accommodating at this end.

I will have the draft proposal for [REDACTED] out by Monday morning PT as promised.

Wingham