

Fiducient Advisors, Nonprofit Investment Stewards Podcast Episode 78, December 9, 2024

Reflecting on Four Years of Lessons from Nonprofit Investment Stewards

[00:00:00] -: Welcome to Nonprofit Investment Stewards with Bob DiMeo and Devon Francis from Fiducient Advisors. Bob and Devon are passionate about helping nonprofit organizations prosper. Whether you oversee endowment foundation or retirement plan investments, this podcast exists to help stewards improve performance, reduce costs, and discover strategies that enable your charitable organization to prosper and advance its mission.

[00:00:26] -: Now onto the show.

[00:00:30] Bob DiMeo: Hello, and welcome back to the Nonprofit Investment Stewards podcast. I'm Bob DiMeo, and always good to be joined by co-host Devon Francis. Today's show, episode 78, it's special for a couple of reasons. First, we reflect upon the incredible journey we've had over the past four and a half years.

[00:00:50] Bob DiMeo: Dev and I are going to share 10 favorite episodes, what we liked about those shows and how that impacts you today as a nonprofit steward. But there's another reason this [00:01:00] episode is special, and that's because episode 78 will be our last show, at least for a while.

[00:01:06] Devon Francis: That's right Bob. It is bittersweet, but we've had the immense privilege of bringing our listeners and viewers insightful conversations, expert advice, and really inspiring stories from the nonprofit experts, and in some cases, true icons.

[00:01:22] Devon Francis: Before we celebrate, by revisiting some of our favorite episodes, perhaps you can share why we decided that this would be our last episode, at least for now.

[00:01:31] Bob DiMeo: Happy to do that, Devon. And we launched this show. If you think back, it was 2020 and it was to fill an important need. We kind of, the world came to a grinding halt and we were no longer getting together with clients and colleagues and prospective clients and all of that.

[00:01:45] Bob DiMeo: And I'm a, as you know, for years, been a, a big fan of podcasts and it just seemed like the perfect way to connect with our clients on important matters and, and friends of the firm and, and, and, and so on. And now. The world's changed. Obviously we're [00:02:00] back in person for quite a while now. Uh, meeting with clients and friends of the firm and, uh, the space, the podcast space has gotten a little bit crowded and at the same time, our content at Fiducient, uh, just both written and webinars and just all we're doing.

[00:02:18] Bob DiMeo: Uh, it seems like a good time to hit the pause button here, but certainly not the pause button with respect to staying connected. So. We're very grateful for the support and engagement from all our listeners throughout the journey. Whether you've been with us from the very onset or if you recently joined, you've made this podcast truly special and we're grateful for that.

[00:02:37] Bob DiMeo: So without delay, let's dive into our top 10 learnings. And I think Devon will start with episode 72, which was Wesley Pate of IR and M. Uh, Wesley. He was on fairly recently and he brought a wealth of knowledge about the fixed income markets. If you recall, he did a deep dive into the evolving role of bonds, especially for [00:03:00] endowments and foundations, but really applied to all investors and Wesley addressed the significant changes in fixed income and and the whole fixed fixed income landscape.

[00:03:09] Bob DiMeo: He highlighted how bonds have become more attractive due to higher yields, and of course shifting economic conditions. He provided some really great insights into strategic role that bonds can play in providing both stability and income for nonprofit portfolios. Uh, I especially like, if you recall, he, he shared how bond investors are probably in a more favorable position now with higher rates than they have been for.

[00:03:36] Bob DiMeo: Decades And an example, he compared, uh, risk and return for investment grade bonds at today's rates, or then rates which are roughly similar to today, uh, compared to much lower rates just a few years ago. I'm gonna use round numbers here, uh, but directionally accurate. Uh, he was effectively saying that, um, imagine you purchase investment grade [00:04:00] bonds with a 5% yield and let's say around a five year duration.

[00:04:05] Bob DiMeo: That means if rates stay the same, you'd be making your 5%, but if rates drop 1%, you'd make your 5% interest. Plus, let's call it 5% in cap gains. But if rates rise 1% and bond prices fall, your interest essentially covers your losses and you break even. Um, and that's very different than not that long ago when rates were so low, uh, the interest you were earning couldn't come close to covering losses from rising rates.

[00:04:36] Bob DiMeo: So, uh, I found that very interesting. And what we wanna do on each one of these is not only highlight what we liked about it, but why it's relevant today for you stewards. And here, here's why we feel this is relevant today. We face. Many, many ongoing economic uncertainties and geopolitical uncertainties and so on.

[00:04:55] Bob DiMeo: The benefits of higher yields and a strategic use of bonds to mitigate [00:05:00] risks that Wesley identified are potentially more important than they ever have been in. And with bonds having more attractive yields today and stock valuations elevated against historical norms. I'd be remiss if I didn't come back and just touch briefly on the three levers.

[00:05:16] Bob DiMeo: We've talked about these numerous times on the show, but every nonprofit, and frankly most every investor, you've got inflows, you've got outflows that you have to target a required rate of return. And with bonds, particularly investment grade bonds yielding more. And stocks perhaps, uh, go forward.

[00:05:33] Bob DiMeo: Expectations being less. Um, you might be able to have greater bond allocations and still achi achieve targeted rates of return. So that makes it especially important and relevant today.

[00:05:45] Devon Francis: Great. So the first episode that I'll share in terms of my, uh, top 10 favorite episodes is episode number 48, fundraising Strategies to Increase Donor Engagement with Brian Gower.

[00:05:58] Devon Francis: And one of the things that [00:06:00] I found so fascinating about this episode is Brian introduced us to a fundraising equation. So he made the concept of fundraising much more quantitative. Usually it's not at all quantitative, so, so Brian shared with us this equation and the equation is philanthropy plus gratitude multiplied by connection, story, and urgency.

[00:06:23] Devon Francis: Divided by barriers. So what did he mean by all of this philanthropy? Uh, you know, one of the things that he talked about is that philanthropy is a learned behavior. So it's a lot, uh, it has a lot to do with the environment that you're raised in. Did your family make a practice of giving? Is philanthropy something that you were familiar with and, you know, had been introduced to, uh, for quite some time?

[00:06:47] Devon Francis: You know, it's all, it's all in the background. Gratitude, what do you get from giving to this organization? It could be, um, purely emotional, just a feeling of [00:07:00] goodwill. It could be, uh, a tax benefit by, by giving philanthropically could be your name on a building. It could be a little coaster that you get in the mail, but you know, you, you get something back, uh, from the act of giving.

[00:07:13] Devon Francis: So those are the two baseline factors. Philanthropy plus gratitude. Then you amplify by your connection. So a connection to the cause. Um, oftentimes we see someone who, they themselves or a family member has been impacted by a medical condition. So then they begin, um, giving philanthropically to that cause.

[00:07:35] Devon Francis: Or perhaps they have a neighbor or a colleague who, who's been impacted that, that sort of thing. That's the connection, the story, the impact. That your gift will have, you know, making it personal to the giver. And then urgency, why give now Why is it important to give now rather than, you know, next month when they have a little more time?

[00:07:56] Devon Francis: An example of a great, um, [00:08:00] use of urgency is a matching donation. So, uh, or a challenge match, so, okay. You know, any donation that's made within the next two weeks will be matched by a group of generous donors that tends to, to resonate really well in the. Philanthropic community. And then finally you have barriers.

[00:08:17] Devon Francis: So it was philanthropy plus gratitude multiplied by connection, story, and urgency divided by barriers. So what is the friction to the giving process? You know, one of the things that Brian talked about in this episode is that it's more difficult to make a charitable donation than it is to make a, a straightforward purchase online.

[00:08:40] Devon Francis: You know, buying a sweater or, or something like that. So, um, nonprofit organizations really need to be intentional about, to the extent possible, reducing the barriers to giving. So I thought that that was just really fascinating and a very different way of looking at philanthropy [00:09:00] and making it, um, more objective and concrete.

[00:09:04] Devon Francis: And of course, the reason that it's relevant for nonprofit stewards today is because. Almost all nonprofit organizations rely on fundraising, rely on donations. Now, that's not always the case, for example, with private foundations, but using this, uh, fundraising equation or philanthropic equation helps make the concept of fundraising more concrete, more objective.

[00:09:30] Devon Francis: You can kind of follow this disciplined equation and, um, you know, perhaps, uh. Adjust the variables so that you can come up with a better outcome. And I think oftentimes what we hear from not only the nonprofit clients that we work with, but also organizations that, you know, people give to charitably, uh, we as donors might say, oh, you know what, I, I get the same.

[00:09:55] Devon Francis: Direct mail campaign or this organization follows the same practices [00:10:00] it's been following for years. Uh, and I think we need to acknowledge that it's a different landscape out there now, and I think this formula can help make institutions be more intentional in the way that they are approaching fundraising.

[00:10:14] Bob DiMeo: Yeah, that's great. And it's not surprising to me, Devon, that the, uh, the formula resonates, uh, uh, for folks who do a lot of analytical work like you and I do, and, and frankly, it segues very nicely into the third show that we'll highlight, and that is episode 25 with Park Hall on the power of Storytelling for nonprofit organizations.

[00:10:35] Bob DiMeo: And I've known Park a long time. Uh, he's had a. Podcast of his own. I've been a guest on his show a couple of times over the years, and, and he joined us a while ago. His business is pretty neat in that he trains organizations on how to tell their story in a more clear and engaging way. Uh, park's been called the world's most industrious storyteller, and he brought unique perspectives to our show.

[00:10:59] Bob DiMeo: Uh, I like that [00:11:00] Park's ability to illustrate the power of storytelling in a way. That was both practical and inspiring his insights into how nonprofits can craft compelling narratives to engage donors and stakeholders. That was super valuable. But separately Park talks about, uh, folks like us and our listeners who oversee numbers, right?

[00:11:20] Bob DiMeo: Investment performance calculations, fundraising, things of that nature. Park emphasizes that people remember story over stats. I think that's a, um, you know, sort of a good bumper sticker to keep in mind. And there are countless examples of, um, he calls it sort of the, the, the classical story where they're set up.

[00:11:38] Bob DiMeo: Conflict resolution. You see it in everything from a good movie to the Gettysburg address. Um, what makes it relevant now? Uh, if you think about our listeners who are stewards overseeing nonprofit investments in many instances, parks Insights, they're super relevant in this very competitive landscape that we're in right now.

[00:11:57] Bob DiMeo: The ability to tell a compelling story. It's [00:12:00] crucial for differentiating your organization's value to potential donors and partners. Then park's advice on leveraging storytelling to enhance donor engagement, communicate investment performance, and a lot more. It provides good framework, uh, for listeners.

[00:12:16] Bob DiMeo: Uh, he, he also emphasizes clarity, emotional engagement, and authenticity. And those qualities and attributes seem more important than ever in today's world. And again, for those of us who deal with numbers, uh, have to regularly provide updates, you and I are doing it every 90 days, typically with clients.

[00:12:35] Bob DiMeo: Uh, Devon, I never forget the Point Park made when he said, uh, I think he asked the question actually. He goes, keep in mind what are the first three letters of the, uh, word numbers? And of course it's NU Mnu. So he said, keep that in mind. That story really matters and numbers numb. So, uh, uh, that's what uh, what I really liked about Parks [00:13:00] episode and what I think is relevant today.

[00:13:02] Devon Francis: Yeah, that was a great one, Bob. So the next one that I'll share is episode number 53, and this episode was titled The Secret Sauce for High Performing Nonprofit Organizations. And our guest on this episode was Jeffrey Perry. Jeff is the founder and CEO of an advisory firm that helps organizations improve business and leadership performance.

[00:13:24] Devon Francis: And the conversation was just broadly about the characteristics of high performing organizations. But one of the highlights for me is during our conversation, Jeff introduced a phrase that was brand new to me. And, um, the phrase was the peanut butter approach. Mm-Hmm. So he used this phrase, phrase specifically with regard to ESG investing, but it could be applied in a number of different ways.

[00:13:49] Devon Francis: So the way that he framed it is if you take the peanut butter approach to ESG investing, you try to cover the entire landscape, be all [00:14:00] things to all people. Just kind of an all encompassing, broad approach. And Jeff made the argument that this is not a sustainable approach. You can't really stay ahead of that.

[00:14:09] Devon Francis: You can't do everything and be everywhere all at once. And then he contrasted that with the other side of the spectrum, which was the whack-a-mole approach. And, uh, in that he was talking about responding to things as they arise and. Being purely reactionary. So an issue popped up, you beat it down like that.

[00:14:29] Devon Francis: Whack-a-mole, uh, mallet. Um, and, and the way, you know, Jeff contrasted those two types of approaches and said neither one of them are, are really, um, the way that we should be approaching anything. Like ESG investing or, or, or any other type of, of, um, issue. He said that the best approach is really to lean into the areas that are material to your organization specifically and spend your time and attention there.

[00:14:57] Devon Francis: And then, you know, perhaps let other things fall by the [00:15:00] wayside. I. And the reason that this is relevant to nonprofit stewards today is, um, you know, this is a concept that's come up in many of our conversations. I remember clearly it came up when we spoke with Scott Malpass. I imagine that Scott May, uh, be, um, highlighted in this top 10 reel.

[00:15:19] Devon Francis: Um, but you know, when it comes to ESG investing or any type of mission-driven focus, it doesn't need to be all or nothing. It doesn't need to be all encompassing. Really, the the right way

to approach it is to employ a focused approach. Do the best you can in the areas that are the most meaningful to your organization, and that will have the most significant impact.

[00:15:45] Devon Francis: And I think a lot of times folks really need to hear that and need to be reminded that. Um, you know, sometimes perfection is the, uh, enemy of progress. Um, and, or, or perfect is the enemy of good perfection, uh, progress, [00:16:00] not perfection. Um, but, you know, do the best you can in the areas that are most relevant, most meaningful.

[00:16:06] Devon Francis: And, um, you know, it, you don't need to be perfect. You don't need to, to hit every single issue along the way.

[00:16:13] Bob DiMeo: That's great. I, I, I need to remember, uh, the, the peanut butter, um, uh, point and, uh, I think we can apply that to a lot of things, and certainly it applies on the ESG and, and related fronts. And you mentioned Scott Mal Pass, so why don't we tackle that, that episode next, that, that was actually episode 65 with Scott Mal Pass, and Scott's a good friend, someone I consider to be one of the most successful investors.

[00:16:38] Bob DiMeo: Full stop. Uh, his journey from leading Notre Dame's endowment from 400 million to nearly 15 billion when he departed not that long ago. That's world class. And I truly appreciate Scott's humility and his care for others. I think what came across in that episode, and if you, uh, spend any time with Scott, you get to know this, the amazing impact that [00:17:00] he has and, and again, his humility.

[00:17:02] Bob DiMeo: He routinely over the years at Notre Dame. He would help so many organizations, a parish or a school or someone would call him up and pick his brain on investing. He was so helpful. That ultimately led to Scott Co-founding, along with Jack Brennan, uh, uh, former CEO of Vanguard and others creating Catholic investment services, which has had huge impact.

[00:17:23] Bob DiMeo: Uh, Scott has so many other selfless acts, including, uh, being on the board of the Vatican Bank, being integral in establishing Catholic investment. Policies and just a whole lot more. Um, but on the investment front, it was great to glean insights from Scott and his approach to investing. He is an absolute true believer in growth or capital appreciation for the long term.

[00:17:47] Bob DiMeo: Like there's no fooling around in his book, like you invest to, to grow capital over time. And that certainly has played out in his performance. And what I enjoyed most about the episode again, was his humility, his deep [00:18:00] insights into the world of endowment management and, and his stories about the challenges and triumphs he faced.

[00:18:06] Bob DiMeo: Uh, you know, they were. They were inspiring and frankly, very educational as well. Uh, it, it almost was like a masterclass in balancing ethical considerations and financial performance and, and just outstanding. Uh, so why is it relevant today? For starters, there's a ton of noise out there. Uncertainty in the markets, the economy, geopolitical and such, that makes things challenging for those overseeing endowments and foundation.

[00:18:31] Bob DiMeo: I think Scott's experience and advice provide a, a really valuable, let's call it roadmap, his, his success at Notre Dame. It's a testament to the impact that thoughtful, strategic, intentional management can have on an institution and, and frankly, its ability to fulfill its mission. So the episode, it's a reminder that the right approach, and with doing things right, you can achieve both financial success and positive social impact.

[00:18:58] Bob DiMeo: So I'd love that [00:19:00] episode.

[00:19:01] Devon Francis: I agree, it's, it's hard to find an investment icon who's, uh, more worthy than Scott Mal Pass. So that was a wonderful episode. And Bob, as you were just speaking, you said there's a ton of noise out there that leads perfectly into my next episode, which is episode 75, navigating Communication in a Noisy World with Dean Brenner.

[00:19:22] Devon Francis: So we had Dean on, he's the president, CEO of Vladimir Group, which is focused on, um, executive communication skills. And, um, he shared a lot of great tips, talked a lot about the distractions in today's world. But one of the things I found so interesting about that episode with Dean is that he shared a specific story going back to Park Howell as episode.

[00:19:46] Devon Francis: It's all about the storytelling. So Dean shared a story about working with an executive. Who was new to a leadership role, and the first time that he addressed all of his employees in [00:20:00] a firm-wide meeting, he totally got off on the wrong foot. He came out of the gates talking about streamlining efficiency, shareholder value, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:20:10] Devon Francis: He was a numbers guy. That was what made sense to him. But he failed to think about how his audience would perceive this message and the folks that. Heard him speak all of a sudden completely panicked. And what they heard with those phrases, streamlining efficiency, shareholder value, they just heard layoffs in their mind.

[00:20:36] Devon Francis: And so none of his message even resonated. It just caused panic. And um, you know, his employees all then went to their managers, are we all gonna be laid off? And um, so certainly that was an example of someone getting off on the completely wrong. Foot and then he had to do damage control. And, you know, it, it became a, a whole, um, a whole issue.

[00:20:58] Devon Francis: So the reason that [00:21:00] that story was so impactful for me is it really hammered home the importance of thinking about your audience, thinking about their background, their experience, and how they are likely to perceive the information that you are sharing with them and the importance of, um. Pro producing a narrative that's going to resonate in the way that you intend.

[00:21:26] Devon Francis: So the reason that this is relevant for folks listening is, you know, you have to be aware that in today's world there are a lot of distractions. People's time is limited. People get very frustrated, understandingly. So by poor communication and whether you're addressing a large crowd or an intimate group in a small meeting, you really need to be aware of that messaging.

[00:21:48] Devon Francis: You need to be aware of the story you want to tell and how your message will be perceived and, and make adjustments accordingly.

[00:21:57] Bob DiMeo: That's great. And I, Devon, I think our [00:22:00] listeners would think that you and I completely synced these episodes. They're just, we did not. So these are really, uh, kind of falling out nicely here.

[00:22:07] Bob DiMeo: And, uh, I'm, this one will slightly change topics. Uh, uh, I, I, I. I really enjoyed episode 60 with David Nurenberg, and for listeners who recall that it was a great show. Frankly, it exceeded my expectation. David chairs the investment committee for one of our clients. That's the, uh, national World War II Museum, which is an amazing place in New Orleans, uh, among other roles.

[00:22:32] Bob DiMeo: He's also chair of the Millstein Center at Columbia Law School, and the center is considered a world leader in corporate governance. There were so many practical insights for nonprofit leadership shared in this episode. What really impressed me were his eight critical questions that nonprofit leaders should consider for effective governance and strategic planning.

[00:22:53] Bob DiMeo: And this is just. This is just good core stuff that all of us serving on boards and committees should keep in mind. So I'm just gonna [00:23:00] walk through these here and I think you'll value them. Uh, number one, who is in the room. And by that he's talking about the importance of having the right people involved in decision making.

[00:23:08] Bob DiMeo: Process seems straightforward, but so often that first step is missed. Number two. How do they spend their time? He talks about efforts being focused on strategic priorities, so easy for committees and boards to sort of, uh, uh, get off. Point number three, what is the culture in the boardroom? David stressed the need for a culture that encourages questioning, dissent, and then open dialogue very importantly, without fear of punishment.

[00:23:36] Bob DiMeo: Number four. What is the mission of the organization? Clarifying the organization's mission is fundamental to guiding its strategic direction and decision making. Number five, what is the strategy that realizes the mission? So developing a clear strategy that aligns with the mission tied of course to its long-term goals.

[00:23:58] Bob DiMeo: Number six, who [00:24:00] is the leader of the organization responsible for executing the strategy? And this gets back to ensuring accountability, effective execution, and so on. Number seven, how does the organization allocate its resources? And he talks here about, uh, how essential this is for maximizing impact.

[00:24:20] Bob DiMeo: Sustainability, right? Are you gonna exist in perpetuity? Well, you've gotta think about these things. And then finally, number eight, what is the impact of the organization on the served community that that, like, why are we here and what is the impact? Evaluating all of that, why it's relevant today, I'm going to share a quote from David to convey that he says.

[00:24:42] Bob DiMeo: On the show, he said, good governance practices such as having a clear mission, effective board structures, and a culture that encourages questioning and dissent are essential for organizational success. The mission of the organization should [00:25:00] never excuse poor governance or leadership. Again, I'll just say the mission should never excuse poor governance or leadership.

[00:25:08] Bob DiMeo: My takeaway for that, and I think it's crucial. I think he's saying successful organizations need both a great mission and great practices, proficient operations, so on and so forth, so you can't use mission as a crutch for weak efforts elsewhere. I really appreciated his perspective on that. And just to put a bow on David's episode, I like that he embraces these courageous conversations and tough decision making.

[00:25:35] Bob DiMeo: And if used them all as necessary for long-term mission success.

[00:25:39] Devon Francis: So the next episode that I'll talk about is episode 32. Become a confident leader with Dr. Karen Gordon, and I'm sure you remember Dr. Karen Bob. She was, uh, so energetic, so dynamic. She was such a great guest. Um, and Dr. Karen talked about the three chairs of leadership.

[00:25:59] Devon Francis: [00:26:00] Insecure, arrogant and confident, and she really painted a very clear picture. She talked about how she's a visual learner and um, she asked everyone to imagine three chairs up on a stage, and the left hand chair is the insecure leader. The right hand chair is the arrogant leader, but in the middle you have the confident leader.

[00:26:21] Devon Francis: Um, and she talked about how a confident leader can effectively deal with conflict because they don't roll over or avoid the conflict, but they also don't steamroll over people. They'll be assertive and will share their viewpoint, but they'll also listen to others with an open mind. And you know, that approach is so much more effective at resolving conflict.

[00:26:42] Devon Francis: Whereas the insecure leader will avoid addressing the conflict and has the potential to triangulate the issue and cause drama within the team, and the arrogant leader will bully and steamroll. Um, so I thought that that visual was really helpful and the examples that Dr. Karen shared were [00:27:00] also really helpful.

[00:27:01] Devon Francis: And the episode in general gives a lot of insight about different leadership styles. Building a workplace culture and um, you know, having that culture, foster confident leaders. Dr. Karen also talked about, uh, how to improve emotional intelligence, um, conflict resolution with different types of leaders or different types of individuals, that sort of thing.

[00:27:24] Devon Francis: So it really was a, a very helpful episode overall. And the reason why I think it's relevant today is, you know, when you're in a role that requires you to deal with people, and let's face it, all of us are, whether it's in our personal lives or our volunteer efforts, or even just. You know, dealing with people out there in society, um, it's important to have, first of all, self-awareness about your own strengths and weaknesses.

[00:27:52] Devon Francis: And also I think it's really helpful to have a decent grasp of behavioral psychology. And this episode tackles both of those things, [00:28:00] recognizing your own behaviors and patterns, and also recognizing behaviors and patterns in others, and talking about how to most effectively deal with individuals that exhibit certain characteristics.

[00:28:12] Devon Francis: So I thought that was a great one.

[00:28:14] Bob DiMeo: That was great. And Dr. Karen's book was excellent. I think it's the Three Chairs is the title of the book. Mm-Hmm. That, that was excellent as well. So I, I completely agree. So that's eight down and two to go. Uh, my final episode that I'll cover, although we could go on and on, there were so many great episodes, but I will, uh, include in my top five, our top 10, episode 42 with Melody Hobson.

[00:28:37] Bob DiMeo: Um, it's a favorite for. Several reasons. First, melody is amazing on many fronts from being co CEO of aerial investments to being chairwoman of Starbucks, serving on other boards. Her appearances on Good Morning Amer, I mean, it just goes on and on and on. She's a truly special person and professional. Uh, what I enjoyed about the episode was Melody, being candid about providing insight on [00:29:00] investing.

[00:29:00] Bob DiMeo: Number one. Then she really delved into DEI and then she also discussed nonprofit leadership. Her input was impressive and frankly enlightening. So Melody emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing unconscious bias within organizations. She explained that unconscious bias can sabotage DEI efforts, if not actively manage, and that makes perfect sense.

[00:29:24] Bob DiMeo: Definitely worth the listen just for that. But then on the investment front, she highlighted the need for nonprofit leaders to evaluate their investment managers and firms. Through A DEI lens. So Melody stressed that diverse teams bring different perspectives which can lead to better decision making and outcomes.

[00:29:42] Bob DiMeo: And then I thought the show got really interesting, I don't have to remember this Devon, but when I asked her what should an investment committee do, and we have a number of clients like this where the incumbent set of managers, um, are strong. Um, but the committee acknowledges that [00:30:00] they lack diversity in their manager lineup and her input there was excellent.

[00:30:05] Bob DiMeo: She offered up a, a couple of useful strategies, if you remember. First she advised that committees should always be seeking progress. Talk to your managers, encourage them to make progress, perhaps set goals and timelines, that sort of thing. And then she also offered up, she called it a dual approach where a committee would continue to work with strong incumbent managers.

[00:30:25] Bob DiMeo: While also seeking out and allocating a portion to, uh, of the portfolio to diverse managers. And, and I thought that was good input and frankly, um, it's worth, uh, getting her nuanced, uh, perspective on that. And going back to that episode, it's relevant today because, um. You think of the focus on DEI is so on point that nonprofit organizations that strive to align their investment practices with organizational values and then her advice to integrate DEI into investment decisions and to focus on both performance and inclusion, uh, that that's just [00:31:00] foundational.

[00:31:00] Bob DiMeo: So I really enjoyed that episode.

[00:31:02] Devon Francis: Yep. And Melody, of course, another investing icon. So she was a wonderful guest.

[00:31:08] Bob DiMeo: Indeed.

[00:31:08] Devon Francis: Before we get to our number 10, I just wanna give a shout out, an honorable mention, if you will, to our CIO Brad Long. Brad was probably our most frequent guest. We haven't chosen one, any one of his specific episodes because he did come on on a quarterly basis, quarterly Quick Takes with Brad.

[00:31:28] Devon Francis: Long he is. Such an expert, such a dynamic speaker. He really puts things in easily digestible terms. Um, so we, we value and appreciate Brad's insight and he was a phenomenal guest. If we were to choose, you know, top 10 guests, Brad would definitely have, have made the cut. So I will leave you with the, uh, number 10, um, my final episode, and this is episode 17.

[00:31:57] Devon Francis: So way back in the early days, um, this [00:32:00] episode was titled 10 10 Habits of Effective Investment Committees. And this was just the two of us, Bob, just you and me. Um, and it really went, it, it went back to basics. So I would actually say, if you're going to listen to and take notes on only one of the episodes in our archives, this is probably the one because it's relevant to the widest group of audience members, and it also includes actionable suggestions.

[00:32:28] Devon Francis: So I won't go through every single one of the 10 suggestions that we made for effective investment committees, but there were suggestions about the size and the background of investment committee members, advice about how the investment committee chair should handle meetings. Logistical advice about meeting preparation, a ton of great guidance.

[00:32:49] Devon Francis: And why it's relevant. It's pretty obvious. It's probably the most directly relevant episode in terms of concrete suggestions and action items to make [00:33:00] sure your investment committee is operating as effectively as possible. You know, this is really one of the key reasons we began this podcast is to provide guidance and direction for folks who oversee nonprofit asset pools.

[00:33:13] Devon Francis: So I think the episode gives a wonderful roadmap for how to make your investment committee more effective.

[00:33:19] Bob DiMeo: Yeah, that's outstanding Devon. And that that, uh, that is a, uh, a, a good guide, if you will, and, and sort of a primer for new investment, uh, uh, committee members and, and a refresher for others. So that's wonderful.

[00:33:32] Bob DiMeo: You mentioned Brad. We should also mention, we had many colleagues on the show over the years and, you know, they all did a great job, but we figured we wouldn't, uh, award any of them. Our colleagues top 10 status, but they're all, uh, stars in our eyes and, and candidly. There you have it. Our top 10 episodes from the past four and a half years.

[00:33:51] Bob DiMeo: It's been an incredible run. We hope you've enjoyed it as much as we have. There are so many people to thank. But Devon, I want to start by sincerely [00:34:00] thanking you for being just an amazing business partner, co-host to the show friend. Like this was new to both of us, and uh, I think. Like, uh, you know, we had a really, um, successful and enjoyable run, and I, I, I couldn't thank you enough for all of your efforts.

[00:34:17] Devon Francis: Right back at you. Bob. Thank you for everything that you've done for being the visionary of this show. Um, you know, all the, the effort that you've put into the show has been just immeasurable. Um, when we began the show show over four years ago, I never would've imagined that we'd have the chance to speak to so many dynamic individuals with such expertise.

[00:34:40] Devon Francis: So it's been really humbling and really wonderful and. Of course, we also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our guests, our colleagues, Patrice, our producer, everyone who has supported the show, and of course, many thanks to our listeners and viewers of the Nonprofit Investment [00:35:00] Stewards podcast.

[00:35:01] Devon Francis: Your enthusiasm, your feedback have been invaluable and we are so appreciative.

[00:35:06] Bob DiMeo: For sure. And, uh, I guess I'll close by saying while we're hitting the pause button for now, this isn't goodbye as always, we encourage you to visit [Fiducient.com](https://fiducient.com) for a lot of other mediums and just a boatload of resources.

[00:35:19] Bob DiMeo: And then all of you should feel free to reach out to me or Devon via LinkedIn or the emails on the show notes if we can ever be in assistance of, uh, be of assistance in any way. So really, to all you good stewards, thanks for investing time to help your nonprofits prosper. Until next time, stay inspired, stay engaged, and keep making a difference.

[00:35:42] -: Thank you for listening to the Nonprofit Investment Stewards podcast. Click the subscribe button below to be notified of new episodes and visit fiducientadvisors.com for more information. The information covered and posted represents the views and opinions of the guest and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of [00:36:00] Fiducient Advisors.

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