

Dear SPD Community,

As you know, we recently brought in Oppenheimer Investigations Group (OIG) to conduct an impartial assessment of Small Press Distribution's workplace, employee concerns, and culture. After a series of confidential one-on-one interviews with current and some former staff members, OIG produced a report that included a list of valuable recommendations. SPD staff requested that we share these with you, which can be done without intruding on the privacy of anyone who participated in the assessment or is mentioned in the main body of the report. As always we welcome your questions, observations, and insights.

The board agrees with the recommendations overall, and some are already under way. We will work with staff on an implementation plan. Some of the topics may be addressed in the mediation and conflict resolution process we plan to start very shortly.

Note that these recommendations were drafted several weeks ago, before it was known that SPD's executive director was stepping down, so they are framed to address either the ED's retention or departure. Please ignore the retention scenario. As you know, we are now seeking both an interim ED and a new ED. We will keep you updated on this, as well as the status of the mediation process.

Sincerely,

Alan Bernheimer, on behalf of the SPD Board of Directors

P.S. We are still eager for recommendations from the SPD community on candidates for the interim ED or ED positions. We should have a job description to post very soon.

Recommended Steps to Take Either Way

Regardless of whether the Executive Director remains at SPD, the organization might consider taking the following steps to generally improve its work culture:

- Provide unconscious bias training to the entire staff and the Board, coupled with a facilitated mediation or group discussion for the staff and the Board to talk through these sensitive issues and come to an agreement about how they want to handle any conflicts that might come up around these issues in the future;
- Hire or designate an HR staff member to receive and investigate workplace complaints, provide trainings, and actively monitor and help cultivate a positive work culture by soliciting staff input and feedback;
- Establish a formal and confidential grievance process for reporting workplace complaints, which designates multiple individuals with whom employees can file the complaints (e.g. their direct supervisors, other managers, designated board members, HR manager, etc.), and educate the staff about the grievance process through trainings and written materials;

- Improve and increase communication between the staff, management, and the Board, perhaps by holding quarterly meetings for all employees and board members to discuss organizational updates and priorities, and by designating a staff representative to attend certain board meetings to communicate staff input and concerns directly to the Board;
- Implement an organizational restructuring that would involve:
 - Selecting another candidate to be a Co-Director with the current Executive Director, if the Executive Director stays;
 - Providing clear, written job descriptions for each position, so that employees are aware of their distinct roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations;
 - Affording managers some degree of autonomy and authority to make decisions over their specific work areas, provided they keep the Co-Directors abreast of such decisions;
- Conduct annual 360 peer reviews for each employee, so that line staff, managers, and directors all have an equal opportunity to evaluate one another;
- Conduct a pay equity review to assess and rectify any disparities, and establish salary ranges for the specific job positions within the organization;
- Engage the staff, management, and board members in regular team-building activities and social events, to foster camaraderie and trust within and across the organization; and
- With input from the staff, prepare and release a public statement, acknowledging missteps that management and the Board might have made in responding to this situation, highlighting and humanizing what the staff experienced through this ordeal, and reiteratin