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## Energizing non-profit leaders

By Todd Devlin

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About 20 executive directors from London-based non-profit organizations got a powerful message at a seminar Tuesday morning – you have hope.

That was the main point delivered by Janet Froot, president of [Horizon Leadership](#), a company that specializes in coaching organizations, at a gathering at the YMCA targeted to the non-profit sector.

"Today I want to bring you optimism," she said. "I want to bring you hope."

"Most importantly," she told her audience, "I want to give you tangible tools and tips that you can use to make things different."

The seminar was focused in particular on what the leaders of these organizations can do to minimize the effects of burnout and loneliness. The seminar was a highly anticipated one, said Michelle Baldwin, executive director of [Pillar non-profit network](#), an agency that supports nearly 130 non-profit organizations in the London area.

"Last March we had a breakfast for executive directors, and over 55 groups showed up for Janet's one-hour presentation on the same topic -- it was the most we'd ever had," said Baldwin. "So we knew there was a keen interest in this."

The workshop covered some useful areas in interesting ways, she said. "You're looking at your personal self as a leader, and stress management. It's still skill-building, but it's a different way of looking at it."

In the highly interactive seminar, the participants cycled through sessions of personal reflective time, partner activities, group exercises and general group discussion.

One of those participants was Barb Jones, the executive director of [ClothingWorks](#), a London group that helps get people into the workforce by providing interview clothing free of charge for men, women and young adults who have a referral from an employment counselling



*Photo by Todd Devlin*

agency.

Jones, who has been with ClothingWorks for six years, found that simply reconnecting with other like-minded individuals in the non-profit sector was enough to get her "re-energized."

**Janet Flood, president of Horizon Leadership, engages her audience in a discussion on overcoming burnout and loneliness**

"These are helping, nurturing individuals. And that's the kind of people I want to be working with. And I also want to be helping someone." Once an advertiser and graphic designer, Jones made the transition to the non-profit sector eight years ago.

"I felt that the skills I already had – marketing and advertising – would be an asset," said Jones. "And I wanted to be doing something to help someone – not selling them something."

That sense of purpose is what Flood was hoping to target and reinforce for the non-profit leaders on Tuesday.

"A lot of the people that work in this sector ... it's because they have a calling for the mission of their organizations," said Flood. "And I really connect with that."

Flood's roots lie in the non-profit sector as well. Before starting Horizon Leadership, she worked in higher education, and in the health care field, spending five years as the director of St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation. As a coach now, she works with a core client group made up of non-profit organizations.

"I have an affinity for working with people in the non-profit world," said Flood. "I really understand some of the pain, but also the passion." There may be more pain than passion ahead as the economic woes are expected to continue.

"There's the anticipation of uncertainty," said Flood. For some groups, she said, the funding is already shifting.

Social service organizations are especially affected in a bad economy because the needs of their clients increase, she said. "So it's the anticipation of less funding and more need, so 'what do you do?' "

That's why, said Flood, it's now more important than ever to look for ways to combat burnout and loneliness as a non-profit leader. For her, the best part of the seminar is when audience members come full circle.

"The arc of the day is when people start to have the hope and the

awareness that they actually can do something," said Flood. "They understand it doesn't have to be exactly as it is. That's what really calls me to this work. To be able to support these non-profit leaders in whatever way I can is deeply meaningful."