

## LEADERSHIP PROFILE



**Chief Operating Officer**  
**Points of Light Institute**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

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*“Service and civic engagement [are] fundamental to a purposeful life and essential to a healthy world.”*

**--Points of Light Institute website**

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## THE ORGANIZATION

With more than 20 years of history, a bi-partisan presidential legacy and the largest volunteer footprint in the nation, Points of Light Institute has the vision and the strategy to create a quantum leap for service and civic engagement.

The country’s largest network devoted to volunteerism and civic action was formed in late 2007 by the combination of two extraordinary organizations—Points of Light Foundation and Hands On Network. Four years later, Points of Light Institute remains dedicated to inspiring, equipping and mobilizing people to solve some of the world’s great challenges, enabling civic engagement and community impact on an unprecedented scale.



Points of Light Institute (“POLI”) is a fast-paced, mission-driven organization with a decidedly entrepreneurial spirit operating through four main arms:

*building strong foundations for nonprofits®*

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- **HandsOn Network** is the nation's largest volunteer network, mobilizing millions of volunteers in the US and fifteen other countries through some 250 HandsOn Action Centers. HandsOn's network of over 70,000 corporate, faith-based and nonprofit organizations delivers approximately 30 million hours of volunteer service annually.



- **generationOn** ignites the power of kids to make their mark on the world by providing tools and resources and partnering with teachers, parents, and community organizations.

- **AmeriCorpsAlums** leverages a community of over 120,000 experienced volunteer leaders who believe in a lifetime of engagement as a transformational force for change.

- **The Civic Incubator** creates innovation in civic activation, fostering new ideas and solutions through social enterprise, mergers and joint ventures, driving new initiatives and piloting new ventures.

There has never been a time of greater promise for civic engagement and progress. As new generations, corporations, governments and nonprofits embrace volunteerism and the power of individuals to make a difference, Points of Light Institute stands to benefit from accelerating growth, opportunity and centrality in American life.

The Institute has a staff of about 110 and an operating budget of \$30million a year. POLI has just completed its most successful fundraising campaign ever, culminating in last March's Celebration of Service at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. With all four living former Presidents in attendance and the current President participating by video from his travels abroad, the evening was a direct tribute to President George H. W. Bush, the founder of Points of Light Foundation, and an indirect manifestation of the role the Institute plays in igniting and leveraging the growing enthusiasm for service.



Points of Light Institute is led by CEO Michelle Nunn, a co-founder of Hands On Network. For each of the past four years, Michelle has been named to *Nonprofit Times'* annual "Power and Influence Top 50" list. POLI is governed by a board of two-dozen senior executives,

philanthropists and community activists, all notables in their fields and all possessed of an extraordinary commitment to service and impact.

The Institute has three main goals:

- **Citizen Action:** Create an engaged citizenry where every individual has the opportunity to make a difference through meaningful service engagement.
  - **Civic Infrastructure:** Develop a civic and volunteer infrastructure with the capacity, resources and tools to create change in communities.
  - **Community Impact:** Demonstrate the power of citizens actively engaged in changing our world and solving problems in the areas of education, environmental stewardship and poverty alleviation.



In-depth information about the Points of Light Institute (POLI), its programs and volunteer centers is available at [www.PointsOfLight.org](http://www.PointsOfLight.org). Some representative links of interest:

- POLI's [board](#) and [management team](#) (bios)
- The 2011 [National Conference on Volunteering and Service](#) (video)
- An example of POLI's [CEO Roundtable](#) at work (video)

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Amidst the opportunities and challenges of its strategy, POLI is an organization of great energy and many moving parts. Blessed with a visionary CEO, a superb team of leaders and a highly engaged board, POLI represents a simple concept—service—whose execution is quite complex.

In April 2009, POLI appointed a chief operating officer to help focus management's collective efforts, leverage the network's intellectual capital, and ensure that the operating systems and protocols supported the numerous opportunities for collaboration intrinsic to a multifaceted service organization. The COO made great strides over the next two years by using financial and executive competence to help facilitate the accomplishment of POLI's mission. One result of the COO's performance was to demonstrate for all the value of such a role.



When POLI's COO was tapped in August 2011 to become CEO of another ambitious, growth-minded nonprofit, every member of POLI's management

team endorsed the plan to recruit a strong successor. Indeed, the appetite for such a player is pervasive, even as the expectations for the next COO have grown, given the predecessor’s impact.

## THE RELATIONSHIPS

Reporting to the CEO, POLI’s next Chief Operating Officer will be a key member of the senior leadership team and an important resource and advisor to the CEO and the Board of Directors. As can be expected in a high-growth, entrepreneurial organization with bold ambitions, the COO will play a critical role in driving organizational evolution and solidifying the operating standards, systems and structure to support POLI’s expansive goals for community impact.

POLI’s organizational structure is constantly evolving, although future changes are likely to represent refinements rather than fundamental shifts in programs or concept. At present, the COO can expect the following principal interactions:

<b>Reports to:</b>	CEO, Points of Light Institute
<b>Direct reports:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Development Officer</li> <li>• Chief External Affairs Officer</li> <li>• Chief Financial Officer</li> <li>• Chief Performance Management Officer</li> <li>• Chief Strategy &amp; Public Policy Officer</li> <li>• Chief Technology Officer</li> </ul>
<b>Other key relationships:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President, Action Network</li> <li>• President, Civic Incubator</li> <li>• President, programs [vacant]</li> <li>• Chief of Staff</li> <li>• Board of Directors</li> <li>• External partners, stakeholders and advisors</li> </ul>

## THE LOCATION

The COO is based at Points of Light's corporate office in Atlanta, Georgia; POLI itself has offices in Washington, DC and New York City, and its affiliates are located in cities coast to coast across the US and in 15 other countries. Occasional travel is a necessity.



## THE RESPONSIBILITIES

A self-directed executive operating with substantial latitude, the Chief Operating Officer can be expected to tackle several significant challenges simultaneously:

- *Culture:* As POLI continues its march to maturity, no one wants to lose the entrepreneurial spirit or community commitment that has characterized the operation since its founding some 20 years ago. The quest for increased effectiveness and impact cannot come at the cost of a treasured cultural framework.

Even when a changed culture may be the goal, change must happen in ways consistent with the organization's tolerance for change.

- *Focus:* Points of Light is an idea machine, and there are always more opportunities at hand than there are resources to pursue them. Focus has not always been the organization's key strength, but most team leaders now understand that the decision to do *this* means that we cannot do *that*, or at least not yet. Helping management stay focused on agreed-upon strategies, and helping make those strategies actionable, will be a key part of the COO's responsibilities.



- *Competence:* Points of Light is good at many things, and the COO must ensure that the institutional resources are managed and organized in a way that maximizes their value to POLI's programs and constituents. The COO must guide an exceptionally broad and diverse portfolio of activities—and do so with a light touch, an open mind, a sensitivity towards mission and yet a decisive management style.
- *Integration:* Because of the progress of the past 30 months, the new COO will have a breakthrough opportunity to implement the new strategy now being finalized by the board. In particular, how well back-office functions are integrated to advance the cause of service across the network will have a disproportionate impact on POLI's future. None of the parts of POLI under the COO's purview—resource development,

financial sustainability, risk management, compliance, technological leverage, reputation management, organizational development, strategy and policy—can thrive in isolation. How the pieces integrate with each other and with the programmatic units will influence success for years to come.



Among the key expectations for the COO:

- **Lead the refinement of a solid, sustainable operating framework** appropriate to the mission and ambitions of a dynamic national nonprofit. For example, over the past two years, POLI has melded two distinct financial operating cultures into an integrated platform. Financial policies and

protocol have benefitted from tightened discipline, but there is much work yet to be done in this and other parts of what is still an evolving organization.

- **Facilitate growth in capacity**, individually and organizationally, consistent with the entrepreneurial drive that has been so central to POLI's success. Points of Light has made great strides in instituting fact-based tools for analysis and decision-making while respecting the special instincts around service that characterize so many of its team members. As a maturing organization, POLI wants to be sure its people are as good as they can be, and the COO must help ensure the tools and processes are in place to support their personal and collective growth.
- **Continue to leverage the power of effective working partnerships** across the spectrum, among the leadership team, affiliates, constituents, donors, stakeholders and outside advisors (including as auditors, consultants and legal counsel). Rapid growth often outstrips the development of organizational infrastructure and processes, and the COO must model the collaborative leadership style which is important to current operations and critical to future strategy.



The ideal candidate will have a strong background in at least two of the functions under direct management, one of which ought to include finance, broadly construed. While POLI is open to those

with experience in both nonprofit and corporate settings, evidence of a strong commitment to voluntarism or at least to nonprofit service in general is a prerequisite for serious consideration.

## THE CANDIDATE

We seek a Chief Operating Officer with a significant history of leading organizational change in complex settings with an entrepreneurial ambience.

### **The ideal candidate will offer**

- A broad strategic perspective, with demonstrated acumen in cross-functional leadership and collaboration, especially involving finance, technology and marketing
- An adaptable management style, likely gained from having managed a diverse portfolio of activities, business lines or projects
- The intellect and nimbleness to excel in a complex, fast-moving context involving multiple sites, stakeholders and revenue streams
- Success leading large-scale initiatives, change management and culture shifts
- Superior ability to conceptualize, articulate and communicate key issues and concepts in broadly accessible terms



- Experience directing and implementing new systems, processes and technology to enhance overall operations and effectiveness, balanced with a genuine sensitivity to the people issues involved
- Proven capacity for collaborative leadership of staff, volunteers and outside advisors; a consultative approach to management
- Respect for technology and its increasing role in expanding connectedness and supporting impactful voluntarism
- A record of building and mentoring—but not micromanaging—high-performing teams
- The ability to operate in a flexible, entrepreneurial and opportunistic environment
- The willingness to let other leaders lead, combined with the strength to say “No” or “Not yet” in ways that can be heard and respected

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### **The ideal candidate will be**

- Financially astute, culturally sensitive, and operationally oriented
- A bold and creative leader with a bias for considered action
- Capable of leading, inspiring and collaborating with motivated, achievement-oriented colleagues
- A proactive relationship-builder with high emotional intelligence
- A collegial, collaborative and accessible approach, yet one which is also forceful, self-confident and decisive
- Passionate about POLI's mission and purposes, as evidenced in part by a tangible commitment to service and voluntarism
- A problem-solver with the ability to put strategy to work
- A leader who values data-driven decision-making; someone who promotes and executes thoughtful, practical solutions
- A superior communicator with strong interpersonal skills
- Committed to continuous improvement, both personal and organizational
- Politically adept, with an innate sense of when to act and when to ask
- An energetic, energizing leadership style balanced with personal humility, a playful spirit and a healthy sense of humor; someone willing to take time to celebrate the team's successes
- A champion for operational excellence
- Comfortable dealing with sophisticated partners and funders
- Respectful of diverse viewpoints, backgrounds and perspectives



### **And the ideal candidate will possess**

- Deep grounding in a service-driven environments, preferably those with a strong cultural legacy emphasizing team performance
- Experience in driving integration and collaboration. Managing mergers and acquisitions, and the resulting integrations, have been a big task for the COO recently. Successful integration of already-acquired assets will continue to be an important part of the COO's role in the near future, and future growth must be supported by infrastructure appropriate to the strategy and time.

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**Five years from now**, with the assistance of the COO, Points of Light Institute expects to have developed

- ✓ An even stronger affiliate network, with comprehensive programmatic content, capacity and delivery channels and interdependency between the corporate office and the affiliates;
- ✓ An unparalleled reputation as the convener of choice, bringing together major players around issues of consequence;
- ✓ Deep operational competence in its core lines of business;
- ✓ A solid reputation as a vibrant and dynamic resource across the country and beyond—an organization known for innovation, creativity, impact and consistency in generating ideas, pathways and platforms for service; and
- ✓ Broad acceptance as a great place for committed individuals to work, grow and prosper.

Points of Light Institute is an equal opportunity employer, and we are developing a diverse slate of compelling candidates for formal consideration.

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**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect,  
please email**

**[POLI@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:POLI@BoardWalkConsulting.com)**

**or call**

**Sam Pettway or Joan Schlachter  
at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).**

**For the current status of this and other executive searches, please visit  
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