

**PEER KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SERIES**

# LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF: KEVIN BYRD

Dear younger self,

In 2009 you applied for a job you were beyond passionate about, spent countless hours preparing for the interview, and poured your heart and soul into the selection process. Well, it is safe to say, it is all worth it.

Many of the assumptions you made about the organization's ability to adapt for the members' needs while becoming more relevant were true. Engaging the staff team in a way that allowed them to own pieces of the organization have helped grow people professionally while attracting top-notch talent that is driving the region forward. With the board's support the organization is able to navigate some challenging headwinds on projects, implement a name change, update the logo, and take on several new lines of service. Getting the Executive Committee and full Board of Directors involved consistently on a monthly basis will be keys to agency impact in the region.

The one thing that will keep you awake at night are not problems with projects, but rather when a team member has an issue. No doubt, these are the things that are last on your mind at night, the ones that wake you up when you're sleeping lightly at 3:00am, and the first thing on your mind when the alarm goes off each morning. Trust your instincts in that you approach each situation genuinely with an open mind.

When thinking about your day and your week, be intentional about where you are investing your time because it is a limited resource in this position. Investing time internally and externally is critical to the overall success of the agency while not losing focus on work-life balance. The position can become all-consuming and there are limitless things you can do, so be strategic and try to remain focused.

Be sure to avail yourself to all the training and networking you can through VAPDC, SERDI and NADO. The industry professionals that comprise these organizations will help you climb the steep learning curve faster and navigate pathways when the going gets tough. These organizations will offer some unforgettable life experiences you won't want to miss!

Oh, and the people you'll meet along the way from all over the country in these organizations will contribute to your life in ways you didn't think possible. Hardly a week goes by without getting a message from a colleague that fits in the category of supportive, funny, or absurdly funny.

These moments of levity and fellowship will provide strength when it is needed most.

It remains true, every day is different, and the challenge is beyond gratifying. Just remember, regional wins often take a long time to develop and when they do, lots of people get to benefit. So, be patient, hire great people and above all else have fun!

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