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# Jeffrey L. Bradach

Nonprofit adviser

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Wearing a blue shirt and red tie, Jeffrey L. Bradach could be sitting in any corporate office. He has a 10th-floor view of Clarendon Street, a decent-size desk, pictures of the family around. But the Oregon-native never intended to work for The Man.

Instead, Bradach is working on behalf of hundreds of nonprofits in and around Boston -- and nationwide for that matter -- to help them realize their potential in a world where they're often struggling to survive. As the head of The [Bridgespan Group](#), Bradach has led his own nonprofit through significant growth since its 2000 inception -- not a bad feat for a self-proclaimed "West Coaster" with plenty of academic smarts about leadership but who didn't have the practical experience before Bridgespan.

Bridgespan's mission is to apply for-profit practices and strategies to create strong, effective nonprofits. Since Bridgespan believes nonprofits provide the best hope and source to solve pressing social problems, its only goal is to help make effective nonprofits even more effective. It does this three ways. One is by providing consulting services that focus on data about that nonprofit. Nonprofits are chosen to work with a Bridgespan team of four to six people over six months. During that time, they examine who they are, what they do -- and if they are doing it in the most effective way. The other service is knowledge: Bridgespan believes what can help one nonprofit may help others, so it makes public -- and free -- its results once it has worked with a nonprofit, if those findings are helpful.

Bridgespan works with 50 nonprofits, annually, but the demand is much greater. Since 2000, Bridgespan has helped more than 200 nonprofits, nationwide.

But Bradach, 47, insists neither he nor his organization is any kind of nonprofit-fixer.

"We help nonprofits and philanthropists find ways to achieve greater levels of impact," he says. "The measure of success is outcomes on the ground."

The most pressing issue facing nonprofits today? "Generating results in a world where the need is greater than the capacity to serve," says Bradach. "The pressure for results comes from both the outside -- funders demanding more -- and the inside, leaders seeking to strengthen the impact of their work. Bridgespan helps nonprofits and philanthropists chart a path to maximize their results." He says the way to the future is thinking through how to fund nonprofits in sustainable ways.

Bridgespan was founded by Bradach and Thomas J. Tierney, a former partner and chief executive of [Bain & Company Inc.](#), on the shoulders of Bain. Both met at Bain in the early 1980s in San Francisco, where Tierney was working and where Bradach was a fresh-faced college recruit. It would be the only for-profit job that Bradach would hold.

"I was interested in learning more about business," said Bradach. "(It was) a very results-focused culture. ...The two years at Bain profoundly affected how I think about problems: 'With 100 things going on, what are the one or two things that effect the organization?'"

For seven years Bradach served on the faculty of [Harvard Business School](#), teaching Organizational Behavior. In 1998 he published a book, "Franchise Organizations" -- he plucks from his shelf and waves -- as an outgrowth of his graduate work on scaling multi-service for-profit operations. It was this book and his work at Bain that led him to wonder how nonprofits might benefit by applying best business practices -- not unlike the franchise model.

Over two years Bradach and Tierney met regularly for breakfast at the Maugus Restaurant in Wellesley, hammering out Bridgespan's purpose, going through the drill they might put to their clients: What was its purpose? How would it be effective? Were, in fact, their services needed?

Tierney, chairman of Bridgespan, and Bradach raised \$6.5 million to start up Bridgespan; Bain is a supporter and strategic partner. Bridgespan employees, of which there are 140 (there were nine to begin) get Bain consultant training. Bain consultants are hired, on a rotating basis, by Bridgespan.

Bridgespan has done its own growth. The projected operating budget for 2007 is \$19 million, up 65 percent from 2005 when it was \$11.5 million. It is expanding to the ninth floor this year and has already added 25 new hires for this year. Bridgespan also provides Bridgestar, an online job board and nonprofit executive search arm designed to develop one of a nonprofit's greatest assets -- its staff. Bridgestar features a best-practices hiring tool kit, which includes a checklist and interview guide.

Bridgespan grows as the need for nonprofits to innovate becomes more acute. Barbara Duffy, founder and executive director of [My Turn Inc.](#), a Brockton-based youth development agency, said after her organization was what she calls "Bridge-spanned" in 2003, it now has a \$4.3 million budget and operates in three states. "We don't have a lot of time or even capital for investing in thoughtful growth," said Duffy. "And Jeff is a real advocate of that ... Jeff epitomizes what Bridgespan stands for."

Bradach grew up in Germany, where his father taught for the American school system. It was his family's own interest in political issues that helped feed his passion for wanting to change the world. "That informs my work daily. ... Why the world is as it is, and what can you do about it?"

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