

Creating the Change We Need

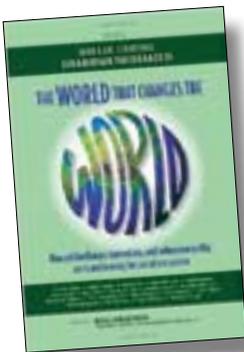
There are more than three million social purpose organizations around the world, including nongovernmental organizations, nonprofit organizations, and social enterprises.

The World That Changes the World: How Philanthropy, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Are Transforming the Social Ecosystem (Jossey-Bass, www.josseybass.com) looks at this “world” of the social purpose sector—how it’s gotten to where it is, what drives it, and where it might be headed.

Edited by Willie Chang and Sharifah Mohamed, this ambitious 404-page volume contains essays by over twenty experts on the social purpose sector. They explore such topics as venture philanthropy, volunteerism, donor management, government regulation, leadership, technology, finance, capacity building, and types of social entrepreneurs.

The book emphasizes the dynamism of the sector and highlights its greatest—and perhaps least understood—strengths: the capability to work together with increasing skill and ease, and to develop world-changing movements. The authors understand both the obstacles and the power of social change. They analyze the challenges and opportunities of creating the change our sector seeks in a way that can benefit each of our organizations. □

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler



Break Free of Digital Distractions

Our constant connection to technology leads to enormous stress and steep declines in productivity and satisfaction. Information overload keeps us from seeing the big picture: We’re trapped in the trees rather than seeing the whole forest. *Conquer CyberOverload* by Joanne Cantor (Cyber-Outlook Press, www.cyberoutlook.com) describes ways to take back our lives:

- **Schedule regular breaks** in which you leave technology behind and do something relaxing and fun. Alternating between intense focus and relaxation is the best way to achieve peak performance.

- **Limit TV time.** Research shows that the more TV people watch, the more stressed, anxious, and dissatisfied they are.

- **Reduce contact with your messaging devices.** Constant interruptions are so detrimental to the brain that you can begin to have symptoms of dementia. Turn off your cell phone for a few hours at a time. Change your e-mail so that it checks for messages once an hour rather than once a minute. There’s nothing so important in anyone’s life that it can’t wait at least that long.

- **Keep in touch with people physically** rather than virtually whenever you can. The important parts of communication—the real connections—don’t occur through technology. Body language makes up over 90% of people’s messages. Giving and receiving smiles produce pleasurable changes in the brain that can happen only in person.

- **Practice single-tasking** rather than multi-tasking. The truth is that what we call multi-tasking is really task-switching. Rather than doing two things at once, our brain is shifting back and forth between tasks. We end up doing neither one effectively. Do one thing at a time, with your full attention.

- **Set your default browser page** to something boring so you won’t be tempted to start surfing the Internet every time you turn on your computer.

If you come upon something interesting on the Internet, bookmark the page and go back to it later rather than letting it take you away from the task at hand.

As frequently as possible, perform a cyber cleansing. Turn everything off—TVs, cell phones, computers, everything—and just bask in the heavenly silence. □

“The digital revolution is far more significant than the invention of writing or even of printing.”

—Douglas Engelbart

Should You Examine Unemployment Tax Alternatives?

According to a white paper released by the Unemployment Services Trust, employers face increased unemployment tax burdens over the next decade. However, nonprofits have a cost-saving alternative: Under federal law, they’re allowed to leave the state unemployment tax system and only reimburse the state if they have an unemployment claim.

While this strategy can provide substantial savings, it also places more liability on an organization to accurately track unemployment claims and protest improper claims if needed. In addition, there’s the risk that sudden increases in claims could impair cash flow, as each claim must be paid out as it occurs. These risks must be weighed against the savings benefits.

One strategy to reduce these potential risks is to join an unemployment trust. The white paper (“Rising Unemployment Costs and 501(c)(3) Strategies,” info@chooseUST.org) explores how nonprofits can be protected from unexpected claims with a trust’s stop-loss protection.

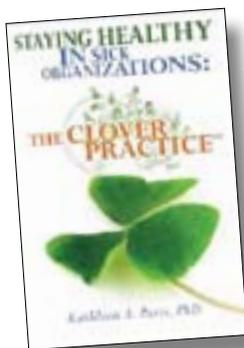
No single approach is right for every nonprofit organization. But a thorough evaluation of the options—becoming a reimbursing employer, joining an unemployment trust, or staying with the state—is warranted. □

How to Cure a Sick Organization

A healthy organization is like a healthy body, functioning to capacity, its parts working in harmony, mending itself quickly when things go wrong. If your organization isn't as healthy as it could be, here's a prescription to put it into shape:

- **Distribute** power throughout the organization, not just at the top. Share decision-making and responsibility.
- **Examine** unspoken assumptions. (Example: those in management are the parents; the rest are dependent children.)
- **Be sure** those who manage have the right skills—excellent communication powers, a talent for listening, the ability to apologize, willingness to share credit.
- **Develop** a culture of loyalty by trusting others in the organization, delivering on every promise, and never keeping important news secret.
- **Create** an open communication system rooted in transparency, openness, honesty, and movement across departments.
- **Support** people by giving them access to training and education. Be sure you have a concrete succession plan for leaders.
- **Minimize** stress by encouraging a life-work balance for everyone in the organization. □

—adapted from *Staying Healthy in Sick Organizations* by Kathleen Paris (www.kathleenparis.com)



Six Ways to Make the Mundane Memorable

In *Get Them to Come to You* and his other books and articles, Scott Ginsberg (www.hellomynameisscott.com) offers ways to surprise and delight people, turning routine transactions into unforgettable “Wow” moments:

1. **Notice your phone greeting.** When you call the 24-Hour Fitness Club, they greet you with, “It’s a great day to get in shape!” How do you and others in your organization answer the phone? Say something that reinforces your brand and makes people smile.
2. **Make it fun to say good-bye.** At Disney, they close every phone call with, “Have a magical day!” At QuikTrip, they always say, “Hurry back!” What do people at your organization say before they hang up the phone?
3. **Add value.** When movie-goers went to see “Transformers,” they got free comic books with their ticket stubs. What could you give people with their stubs, tucked in their acknowledgment letters, or to make other transactions fun and surprising?
4. **Figure out what your phone number spells.** Imagine telling someone, “Give us a call at 548-LOVE!” Go to www.phonespell.org to find out what your number spells.
5. **Make a name for yourself.** Scott Ginsberg, aka “The Nametag Guy,” wears a nametag 24/7 and even has a nametag tattooed on his chest. Wearing your name for all to see makes you more approachable, which gives you a chance to convey your message in a memorable way.
6. **Close with flair.** At the end of every article, blog post, video, or anything you publish, be sure your sign-off accomplishes a few things. First, tell people what you do, how you do it, and what’s unique about you. Second, offer an easy way to get in touch with you. Third, have a call to action: a free report, a video to watch, a link to click, an exercise, a thought-provoking question, an e-mail assignment, free access to your online library, or a 15-minute consultation. □

Blending Programming and Financing Decisions

Nonprofit Sustainability: Making Strategic Decisions for Financial Viability (Jossey-Bass, josseybass.com) explores financial information and mission-impact information in an integrated way. The book introduces a tool—the Matrix Map—to help organizations make sound strategic decisions.

When you use this tool, you analyze each of your programs for mission impact and financial impact. You can use this analysis to examine your whole organizational picture and make better strategic choices. Analyzing programs in this way is useful in strategic planning and prepares organizations to adapt to changing circumstances.

Leadership in nonprofits is about balanced, effective decision-making. The Matrix Map is a useful tool to help make decisions that will sustain an organization. □

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Put Aside the Paper Clips

Eugene Fram’s brilliant *Policy vs. Paper Clips*, now out in its 3rd edition, exhorts nonprofits to examine themselves to ensure an effective board-staff partnership. The “Corporate Model” he describes will help boards focus on strategic issues, not paper clips and other trivialities. The book is available at www.amazon.com. □