



## The Matrix Map Revisited

When the authors of *Sustainability Mindset* introduced the matrix map five years ago, they'd had little practical application of this planning tool. Now they have a better understanding of how powerful it is for organizational evaluation. It helps nonprofit leaders (staff and board) change their focus from programs to impact. An organization often falls into the trap of continuing programs simply because no one else offers them, but this perspective doesn't account for organizational sustainability. Just as a hospital might view itself as treating patients rather than providing health care while patients drift away in favor of clinics and on-line medicine, nonprofit organizations must begin strategy development with a broader view of their purposes.

In their new book (published by Jossey-Bass), the authors (Steve Zimmerman and Jeanne Bell) take you step-by-step through the process of evaluating all your programs—including fundraising—for impact and profitability. A program needn't be profitable to be retained—except fundraising—nor does a program need to have the highest impact to be retained—especially fundraising. However, you must have a valid reason for keeping an unprofitable, nonimpactful program and examine how to improve its value (whether that value is profit, impact, or both).

The matrix map helps leaders determine how each program fits into mission, and clarifies where the organization is currently investing resources. It demonstrates how programs work together to create impact and financial viability. It guides you in deciding who should be involved in making strategy.

*Sustainability Mindset* is intended to direct organizations away from strategic plans that gather dust toward adaptive strategy, and to develop people who are constantly thinking strategically. It helps people within organizations think more sustainably through a six-step process:

- **Spell out** your intended impact.
- **Define** the business model.
- **State** intentions and determine if the model reflects them.
- **Develop** strategies (not programs).
- **Prioritize**.
- **Clarify** objectives.

The book is a guide for navigating complex decision-making about an organization's impact. It carefully explains the how and why of each step of the matrix map process to ensure your organization has meaningful strategies. It's a powerful tool for the sustainability of any organization that adds value to communities. 

— reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## Are You Picking the Right Frames?

When making decisions, we all bring with us a stack of “frames” – perspectives organized by our assumptions about the world. To think in a strategic way, we need to understand those frames, as Julia Sloan (sloaninternationalconsulting.com) tells us in her masterful book *Learning to Think Strategically*. She emphasizes six framing traps that can trip us up:

1. **Satisfaction.** Don't become so content with the status quo that you see no reason to change. If you're too satisfied, then critical reflection will be a threat to your sense of self. Remember that discomfort, imbalance, and discontent are powerful triggers for learning.
2. **Immediate Gratification.** If you're all about action, wanting results right now, you may neglect all-important strategic thinking about the future.
3. **Same Frame Thinking.** Beware of the tendency to gather only the information that fits into your existing view of the world.
4. **Expertise.** Sometimes highly expert people make up their minds so quickly that they overlook critical flaws. They can fail to consider surprise elements that may be crucial. Those who lack specific expertise and think more slowly can have an unexpected advantage. Such a person may follow a more deliberate and careful thinking process – noticing more signals, weighing all the factors involved, noticing where data are missing, identifying blind spots, and noting paths of questioning that haven't been taken.
5. **Conformity.** Rituals and group think can be useful in times of stability, because they help create bonds and feelings of solidarity. But when challenges arise, conformity makes it impossible for the group to detect the signals of change and envision new ways of thinking. That has disastrous implications and highlights the need for diversity of thought in strategy meetings.
6. **Over-simplification.** As situations become more complex, fast-paced, and chaotic, it's natural to try to reduce things to their more basic parts. But when you deny the real complexity of the world, you can be caught off guard and derailed when the unexpected happens. Again, adding diversity to your group of advisors will help keep you attuned to the complications and contradictions of the world. 

## Balancing the Drives of Power & Love

In solving tough problems, we often rely either on power (asserting our authority to achieve our purpose) or love (compromising in order to unite with others). But in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words, "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic."

As Adam Kahane explains in *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social Change* (published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers, bkconnection.com), you need both power and love, in balance, to reach your organization's full potential. Love makes power creative instead of destructive, and power makes love generative instead of toxic.

This concise, easy-to-follow book serves as an important reminder to us in nonprofit organizations that balance drives social change and that we often get there through trial and error. *Power and Love* demonstrates ways through the process of finding balance.

People achieve great things not because they have a perfect plan but because they begin to act. They move forward together, taking steps such as the following:

- **Bring together diverse people** with different perspectives, and share ideas.
- **Shift your thinking** from "Someone should..." to "I will..."
- **Practice moving** between power (self-realization) and love (unity with others). Realize that nothing great can be accomplished without both. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## Five Questions for Ethical Choices

When considering a course of action, ask yourself:

- **Will this avoid causing harm?**
- **Will it make things better?**
- **Is it respectful?**
- **Is it fair?**
- **Is it a loving thing to do?**

If you can answer yes to each question, it's an ethically intelligent thing to do, says Bruce Weinstein in his book *Ethical Intelligence*. He lays out a number of ethical dilemmas you may face as a leader, manager, and employer. For instance, expecting staff members to tilt their work-life balance in favor of their jobs is unintelligent management.

An especially useful section of Weinstein's book is his detailed descriptions of books, movies, and TV shows that will enrich your ethical intelligence. The authors he lists range from Aristotle (who considered an ethical life to be one of interconnectedness, in which our choices honor both ourselves and others) to Dr. Seuss, who, in *The Sneetches and Other Stories*, illustrates how stubbornness is ethically unintelligent because it can prevent us from doing beneficial things. 

## How to Improve People's Choices

As a leader, one of your most important jobs is to help others make good decisions. Here are some keys:

- **Provide clear, simple information.** Studies show that people make better choices with simpler information. Break down complex ideas into their basic components before presenting them to your board or staff for their input.
- **Educate people about the fact that we're all less rational than we assume.** Many of our decisions relate to fight-or-flight choices our ancestors made in a world of risks that don't exist today. Other choices are based on arbitrary decisions we made in the past. Often we've built our lives around these choices. But we need to ask ourselves: Were those original decisions wise? Are they relevant today? Were they smart in the first place? Our erroneous decisions can lead to predictable mistakes. Understanding that fact provides a starting point for improving decision-making.
- **Teach people to prioritize their decisions and then use their most productive time of day** to make their highest-priority judgments.
- **When people make mistakes, hold meetings to dissect what went wrong and strategize about what to do next time.** Don't penalize people for making bad decisions, but offer plenty of feedback to assure that they won't continue to make the same poor choices.
- **Remind people what their ultimate objective is** and what values are at stake.
- **Don't provide either-or options.** Even if you think there are only two possibilities, others may come up with choices you haven't considered. Always leave room for more options rather than limiting possible choices.
- **Encourage people to take time to sleep on the decision or distract themselves with a walk or other activity.** Studies find that doing so helps us make better decisions. 

— adapted from *Predictably Irrational* and *How We Decide* (both published by HarperCollins)

## How Anyone Can Be a Philanthropist

In *Middle Class Philanthropist*, Melinda Gustafson Gervasi details ways for ordinary, middle class people to leave important legacies:

- **Direct "in lieu of flowers" memorials** to a nonprofit.
- **In your will, ask that your possessions be sold** at a garage sale with proceeds going to a nonprofit.
- **Leave items to a charity** to auction off.
- **Add a pay-on-death card** to your savings or checking account, leaving the balance to a nonprofit.

Consider sharing these and the other tips in this empowering book with your supporters. 

## The Nudge Factor: Overcome Biases in Making Decisions

A nudge is anything you do to change someone's behavior. When nudging others toward the decision you want them to make, be aware of these common decision-making flaws:

**Status quo bias.** People are much more likely to stick with their current situation than to make a change. Nonprofits can use this bias to their advantage by encouraging donors to sign up for electronic fund transfer (EFT) so that contributions are made automatically each month.

**The planning fallacy.** When people make plans, they invariably think things are going to take much less time than they actually do. You can counteract this problem by building extra time into your schedules and timelines.

**The availability error.** People assess the likelihood of risks by comparing their situation to the most readily available examples. If lots of examples come to mind, they're much more likely to be concerned. If they can't think of any examples, they tend to dismiss the risk. That's why most nonprofit leaders think the risk of an employee stealing from them is small. Nonprofit fraud is far more common than we think, because most nonprofits don't prosecute

it or make it public. *Nonprofit World* publishes frequent articles on fraud to counterbalance this tendency (see [NonprofitWorld.org/members](http://NonprofitWorld.org/members)). 

— Source: *Nudge* (Yale University Press)

## How Green Is Your Organization?

Looking for cost-effective sustainability practices? *Street Smart Sustainability: The Entrepreneur's Guide to Profitably Greening Your Organization's DNA* by David Mager and Joe Sibilila (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, [bkconnection.com](http://bkconnection.com)) provides action steps toward becoming a more sustainable operation, which often opens new opportunities.

This comprehensive book explains a myriad of ways to reduce costs, keep talented employees, improve stakeholder and public relations, increase constituent loyalty, and build partnerships by becoming more sustainable. Clear and cogent, it paves the way for your organization to move forward by becoming more environmentally responsible. 

— reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

## laughter alert

### YOU WRITE THE CAPTION CONTEST

Thanks to all of you who entered the contest. You'll have another chance to win with a new cartoon in our next issue. We're glad to see you all have a solid sense of humor! Keep laughing! And keep sending us your nonprofit jokes, riddles, observations, humorous anecdotes, and the funny experiences that occur every day in the nonprofit sector. Please send to [Jill@NonprofitWorld.org](mailto:Jill@NonprofitWorld.org) with "Laughter Alert" in the subject line.

The cartoonists' original caption is below:



"I don't care if it is a worthy cause, next time make an appointment."

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### and the winner is....



**"This isn't what I had in mind when we talked about your floating Tuesdays."**

The winner of this issue's *Nonprofit World's* cartoon contest is **David Poulin**, Volunteer Programs Manager, Chandler Christian Community Center, Chandler, Arizona ([david@chandlerfoodbank.org](mailto:david@chandlerfoodbank.org), [www.chandlerfoodbank.org](http://www.chandlerfoodbank.org)), who submitted the above caption. (The cartoon on the left is the cartoonist's original caption.)

Congratulations, David! As the winner, David will receive a card deck of "52 Ways to Motivate Your Board and Volunteers" from Carol Weisman ([carol@boardbuilders.com](mailto:carol@boardbuilders.com)), founder of Board Builders ([www.boardbuilders.com](http://www.boardbuilders.com)).