



Don't Let This Crisis Go to Waste

Ask these questions to make the “new normal” work for you.

By Michael Strauss

Most likely you were happy to see the end of 2020. Feelings of stress far outweighed hope last year. We all look forward to getting “back to normal” in 2021.

But, rather than move on as fast as you can, use this crossroad to take stock. Here are key take-aways to help you adjust to the “new normal.”

Don't Ignore Mission Creep

Like many nonprofits, you may have expanded your services over the years and thus moved away from your core mission. Now's the time for review. Ask:

Does what was “normal” in recent years still represent the organization's founding principles?

Have you added programs that don't make sense in the new reality caused by the pandemic? Are these new programs operating at a loss? Do they add to the organization's overhead? Are they putting the organization's overall health in danger? Can you – should you – keep them going even if they don't generate cash flow?

“Use this crossroad to take stock.”

Are all your services still appropriate? Do they line up with your newest goals?

Have you studied your strategic plan lately? Does it need a deep revision in light of the new reality?

Survey your key staff and board members. Ask them:

What are you passionate about?

How would you describe the organization's key strengths?

What programs do you want to be a part of?

Invest in Technology

It may seem counterintuitive to spend more money in the midst of economic challenges. Yet COVID has highlighted how poorly many nonprofits have invested in technology and automation. Tech expenses are investments in the future. It's essential to take advantage of the latest tech. Explore these questions:

How can you automate financial information to provide better data to inform decisions?

How can you minimize the risk of manual errors and limit access to confidential information?

How can you mitigate the risk of fraud or misappropriation of assets?

“This shattering of “normal” is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

How can you use the latest technology to maximize employee engagement?

How can new technology boost productivity, deliver services more effectively, and improve core programs and initiatives?

Diversify Your Funding Sources

In economic downturns like we’re experiencing today, donations and grants become scarce. If you rely on one or two funding sources, you may find yourself in trouble.

Now is the perfect moment to evaluate where your funding is coming from. Review your revenues, and examine any concentrations that pose a problem to the organization.

Has one donor had undue influence on the organization’s direction and caused mission creep? Is there an aging wealthy philanthropist who provides significant annual contributions? Have you engaged with that person’s heirs to see how they feel about your mission?

Is your program a high priority to your grantors or could it be the victim of budget cuts?

The pandemic has shown that looking at your funding sources is more important than ever. Addressing a lack of diverse funding now will set you up for success as the economy recovers.

Too Good to Miss

Don’t let this chance for reflection and recalibration go by. Begin by exploring articles such as these at NonprofitWorld.org:

Keep Or Kill? Score Your Programs (Vol. 21, No. 5)

The Top Five Digital Tools You Should Be Using Right Now (Vol. 34, No. 2)

Risk & Your Brain: Taking Smart Risks & Making the Best Decisions (Vol. 38, No. 4)

Don’t Go It Alone in a Crisis (Vol. 37, No. 2)

Dealing with Viruses & Other Disruptions (Vol. 38, No. 2)

Fraud: How to Prevent It in Your Organization (Vol. 26, No. 3)

Cracking The Diverse-Income Code (Vol. 35, No. 1)

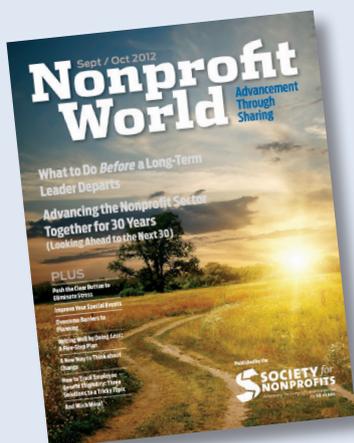
Your Mission Statement Has a Mission (Vol. 19, No. 5)

Top Can’t-Miss Resources for Nonprofits (Vol. 34, No. 3)

Organizations that freeze in the face of a crisis may not survive. You must be proactive if you’re to turn today’s challenges into success. 

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- What Can You Do about a Bounced Donation Check?
- How to Write a Compelling Query Letter
- Preparing for #GivingTuesday: Questions to Ask before You Participate
- Your Board Can Help You Gain Major Gifts
- Ramp Up Your Mailing List to Reap More Funds
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