

Reach New Supporters on a Tight Budget

Marketing requires time, treasure, and talent, three resources that small nonprofits must usually share with other programs. Ways to get more marketing done in less time and on a tight budget are explored in *The Nonprofit Marketing Guide: High-Impact, Low-Cost Ways to Build Support for Your Good Cause*, by Kivi Leroux Miller (wiley.com).

Effective marketing strategy focuses on three key questions:

Whom do you want to reach?

What do you want to tell them?

How are you going to say it?

Successful campaigns target very specific audiences with messages crafted just for them, delivered in a package they can't resist. Miller offers suggestions for how to do so in your own way, using the power of storytelling.

This guidebook describes how even a small nonprofit can portray itself as a leader in its field and keep itself in the front of supporters' minds. Marketing is an important tool you can use to make the world a better place, and this book shows how you can do so very effectively. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

“Marketing requires time, treasure, and talent.”

Larks, Owls, Third Birds, & the Daily Secret to High Performance

If there's one key to working smarter every day, it's an understanding of circadian rhythm, as Daniel Pink tells us in *When* (danpink.com). You probably know about larks and owls, terms that describe people's chronotypes – their personal circadian patterns, with larks waking and going to bed earlier than owls, who like to stay up late and sleep in. But the science of chronotypes reveals that these patterns are more complicated than we once thought.

If you're like most people, you fall somewhere in the middle – neither larks nor owls but what Pink calls “third birds.” And your “best” time of day has to do with the type of thinking you want to do.

Morning is when most of us – larks and third birds – do our sharpest analytic thinking, but later in the day is when we're most likely to have insights. Owls do best at analytic, heads-down tasks in late afternoon or evening, and have more creative, blue-sky breakthroughs in the morning. So it's important to know not only your chronotype but the task at hand in order to figure out the optimum time of day to do it.

Regardless of your chronotype or the job you're doing, the secret to productivity is to plan breaks throughout each day. Pink provides some suggestions:

“Longer lunches enhance morale and performance.”

Create a break list. Alongside your daily to-do list, list the breaks you're going to take. “Even better,” says Pink, “put those breaks into your phone or computer calendar so one of those annoying pings will remind you.” Take at least three breaks a day.

Make your time-outs meaningful and restorative. The best breaks involve movement, nature, and comradery. So, walk, stand, or stretch instead of sitting. Go outside or at least view indoor plants, the trees outside your window, or a painting of nature. If possible, do so with others, because talking with co-workers (about something other than work) is a great mood booster and brain restorer.

Stay away from your devices. Surfing the internet, e-mailing, checking texts, and other tech-related chores don't qualify as the kind of stress-reducing break needed to replenish yourself.

Don't neglect lunch. Longer lunch breaks, lunches away from the office, and lunches with people you like have all been found to enhance morale and performance.

Try the 20-20-20 rule. Before you begin a task, set a timer. Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Such micro-breaks will fight fatigue and pay dividends.

Design a checklist. Use the “trough checklist” idea described on page 2 to assure you stay clear-headed during tasks that require vigilance and clear thinking. At various times throughout the task, stop and ask yourself: What progress have you made so far? What's your next step? What minefields do you need to watch out for? What are you missing? Who can help you fill in any missing pieces? Have you deviated from your plan, and if so, how can you get back on track and assure success? 

How to See What Others Don't

Although we have access to enormous amounts of data today, the problem is that it's hard to know what information to trust as accurate and meaningful. “Humans have a tremendous capacity to sort with little effort or awareness, and this is both a gift and a trap,” notes Constance Dierickx in her splendid, insightful book *Meta-Leadership* (pagetwo.com). She defines meta-leadership as the art of seeing what's true and what isn't, which helps you make better decisions.

She examines a cognitive trap so prevalent we rarely notice it – dichotomous thinking, which she describes as “thinking in black and white, as though with any choice there is a clear, definitive, correct approach and an equally clear wrong one.”

The best leaders adopt a way of thinking that reduces distortions, including dichotomies. Meta-leadership requires a willingness to stand back at times and zoom in at others so that you don't get stuck in either perspective by default. Such flexibility requires intentional adaptation rather than reaction to external forces, Dierickx tells us. The next time you face a decision, ask yourself:

Is your judgment being affected by the dichotomy between certainty and uncertainty? Are you using shortcuts to reduce

uncertainty? If so, you may be more prone to error. As Carol Tavris has said, “If someone is really certain about something, they have almost certainly frozen their ability to change their mind when they need to.” On the other hand, you can’t afford to wallow in uncertainty so long that the time for action has passed. Dierickx advocates “strategic patience,” which involves managing the dichotomy of courage and cowardice. She suggests that courage is something you can develop by experiencing what challenges you in greater quantities over time, and quotes M. Scott Peck, who said, “The absence of fear is not courage; the absence of fear is some kind of brain damage.”

Are you asking enough questions? Ask a lot of “why” questions, not only when things are going badly but also when things seem to be going well, Dierickx says. Study your own performance to make sure there aren’t signs you’re ignoring.

Have you factored the role of emotions into the decision? Studies show that people overwhelmingly underestimate the role of emotion in decision-making. Meta-leaders use emotion as information rather than being swayed by it.

Do you avoid the trap of using either analysis or synthesis as a default? Analysis helps us understand parts of a whole and see relationships between different aspects of a situation, Dierickx explains. Synthesis enables insight about the whole, without which analysis may be technically correct but of little use. Some leaders retreat into hyper-analysis in a crisis, and this can worsen the situation dramatically. Conversely, some people leap to synthesizing by default, ignoring the value of analysis. Meta-leaders use analysis to uncover critical information and synthesis to see the whole story. They understand the value of using both methods in decision-making rather than relying on one or the other.

Are you relying on facts and telling the whole truth? “Time and again leaders are tempted to save face or avoid criticism by telling half-truths, feigning ignorance, or lying,” Dierickx points out. When the misdeeds are discovered, the resulting scandal can topple an organization. 

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What’s Keeping You from Profitability?

What’s holding you back from gaining the revenue you need? *The Growth CFO Void* (forbesbooks.com) by Kirk McLaren details what may be keeping you stuck. He suggests questions you need to ask, including:

Do you know how you’re doing when it comes to keeping existing donors and other customers? Keeping and growing your best customers is like reaching for low-hanging fruit, McLaren says. Remember the 80/20 principle, which holds that roughly 20% of customers generate 80% of revenue. Have you identified that best 20% and planned how to grow their support?

Are you focusing on your top line – gross revenue – and not paying enough attention to the bottom line – net profit or loss? It’s common to get more excited about new customers than keeping the ones you have, but that’s not seeing the whole picture, which includes cash liquidity and valuation, McLaren explains.

Do you have access to working capital? Have you developed a good relationship with your banker and a compelling story about why your organization is loan worthy? Can you obtain a line of credit to bridge gaps between payments you must make and the time you receive money from funders?

Are you making wise decisions on managing capacity? Is your team capable of handling growth? Are you facing capacity issues that cause you to move too slowly?

Do you collaborate with peers to gain insights, eliminate blind spots, and hold yourself accountable? 

Deepening the Heart of Mindfulness

In Asian languages, the words for “mind” and “heart” are the same. So, “if you don’t hear heartfulness when you hear mindfulness, you’re likely missing its essence,” explains Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu in *From Mindfulness to Heartfulness: Transforming Self & Society with Compassion* (bkconnection.com).

Many recent books focus on the science proving that mindfulness can actually change your brain. That research is powerful and important, but this book asks us to look more deeply. The heart of mindfulness – its primary goal – is to become more compassionate, more open, and more inclusive. Such “heartfulness” deepens our understanding of people who are different from us, fosters diversity, and hones leadership skills. Some of the book’s key advice:

Make space for stories. Heartfelt communities are “grounded in storytelling.” Stories help us welcome – and understand – people who are different from us. And telling our stories expands our sense of belonging. Invite people to exchange personal narratives and connect through stories shaped around your organization’s mission and values.

Create a culture of listening. We all need to listen more, talk less, and slow down.

Give people equal time to offer their viewpoints. An “open discussion” won’t bring forth everyone’s voice unless you make a point of including those who are usually silent. To make sure everyone is heard, ask people to write down their ideas before meeting. Then take turns talking, not letting anyone interrupt till the speaker is done.

Cultivate emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and compassion – all of which are demanded of today’s leaders. View leadership through the lens of VUCA (a world that is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous). In such a world, leaders must have the VUCA attributes of Vulnerability, Understanding, Connectedness, and Agility. Heartfulness helps cultivate those traits and makes us more conscious of our position as team leader. 

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Face Risk with Resilience

Most nonprofit organizations understand that change brings risk. Sometimes risk occurs because of environmental change (such as the security challenges that come with shared technology). Sometimes it comes from taking action that's not thoroughly strategized or that's subverted by opposing forces. Some risk arises from innovation. *Managing Your Nonprofit for Resilience* (wiley.com) proposes a risk-management plan that is incremental and standardized.

Although the idea of using lean risk-management practices to increase resilience is admirable, the book has some limitations to keep in mind. The author, Ted Bilich, is the head of a consulting firm specializing in risk management but not necessarily versed in the realities of the nonprofit world. He offers a lot of "shoulds" that come directly from the business sector, and he seems to believe that the nonprofit sector operates primarily with shortcomings not found in for-profits. He berates nonprofits for how "vulnerable" and "ridiculously challenged" they are, for their lack of resources, their reliance on volunteers and funders, and their limited structures compared with businesses. While nonprofits do operate within a capitalist society, their motives reach beyond profit. Nonprofit organizations tend to be more relational, democratic, transformational, and forward-thinking than this book admits.

Still, the book has some important things to tell us about building resilience, which Bilich describes as "an ability to bounce back from setbacks and spring forward toward opportunities" and about lean practices, which go hand in hand with continuous process improvement. The "lean" in lean risk management "emphasizes shared accountability and staff empowerment," he observes. A "relentless focus on the customer" should drive every risk-management decision, he adds, and nonprofits should aim to provide "exactly what customers want, when they want it," and "with a minimum of waste." 

— reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

“Nonprofits are more forward-thinking than this book admits.”

Leverage Happiness in the Workplace

In a work environment full of change and challenges, we need ways to help employees feel engaged, innovative, and connected. The problem is that there isn't one solution that will work for everyone, points out Pamela Gail Johnson in *Practical Happiness* (Health Communications, Inc., hcibooks.com). After studying the research about happiness, Johnson has come up with four principles that will help you keep your employees happy and productive:

Happiness is personal. We each have a genetic happiness set point. After we feel a "high" or a "low," we tend to return to our personal set point. Some people feel joyful and optimistic most of the time, while others are chronically depressed or anxious.

“There is enough happiness for everyone.”

Another factor, especially in these days of social media, is competitive happiness, in which we tend to compare our own lives with others and find ourselves lacking. "Fortunately, we can control how much time we spend on social media," Johnson says, adding, "There is enough happiness for everyone. After all, do you want to focus on someone else's happiness or your own?"

Happiness zappers are manageable. Johnson defines happiness zappers as "those moments that lower our energy and then distract us from recognizing our happy experiences." How we manage those moments determines our overall happiness or unhappiness. Often it's a matter of simply noticing the wonderful things that we tend to take for granted. It's also helpful to see distressing situations as opportunities for growth rather than justifications to stay hurt, angry, and distraught. And one of the best things we can do is find someone who'll listen to us without judging.

Happiness changes as you change. As we mature and gain wisdom, we react differently to the inevitable changes that occur to us all. It's natural to resist change and even to cling to the past. But the best way to find happiness, counsels Johnson, is to acknowledge changes when they occur, mourn the loss that's always part of change, and look for the happiness that's present in this moment. "Life is full of change," says Johnson, "but our happiness about it is optional."

Happiness is bigger than you think. Johnson believes that we all need to recognize and talk about our happy feelings. In our society, we tend to focus on our emotional challenges. We shouldn't ignore those feelings, of course, but we also shouldn't minimize our joy. She wonders: Do you talk about everything that's right as often as you focus on what's wrong? "Happy moments occur all the time," she notes, "even in the midst of unhappy ones." Even when you're feeling sad, a kind word can make you smile, and a good joke can make you laugh. Appreciate those moments, expand your happiness mindset, be aware of all the good things in life, and share these insights with those around you. Doing so will turn your workplace into one that makes people want to be there. 

Solve Problems & Forge Connections with Radical Curiosity

Is curiosity an endangered species? According to Seth Goldenberg, the answer is yes. The reason, he says, is that in today's society we tend to value knowing above learning and doing above thinking. Only by rediscovering the power of questions, he argues, can we revive our sense of wonder and imagination. "We need questions now more than ever," he reminds us in *Radical Curiosity* (crownpublishing.com). He explores a number of principles needed to author better futures:

Take time for relaxed thinking. Goldenberg points out that the word "school" is derived from the Greek word for "leisure," reflecting the idea that we need restful, unproductive time to

think deeply, pursue knowledge, and attain wisdom. Pursue “intentional leisure,” he urges, which is not the absence of labor but the presence of purpose. Active rest heals and cultivates meaning, he explains.

Embrace humor. Humor opens a space between our expectations and reality. It’s a powerful way to experience contradictions. And laughing together is the ultimate bonding experience.

Approach the world critically, actively, and passionately. Radical curiosity is “fueled by awe – rather than fear – of the unknown,” Goldenberg suggests. It begins by challenging assumptions and “asking better questions.”

Step outside existing mental models. Embrace “unlearning” and “unschooling” models, which allow knowledge to emerge through self-directed invention and re-invention. With such a framework, “we are all activists – stakeholders in our own future, working to advance society toward a greater good.”

Take a walk with someone. When you walk with another person, you break down barriers. Walking is a way to slow down and be totally present for another person. 

“The word “school” is derived from the Greek word for “leisure.””

The Biggest Success Factor of All

The biggest factor in your organization’s long-term success is the quality of managers and team leaders, according to a global study of the future of work. As *It’s the Manager* (Gallup Press, store.gallup.com) makes clear, it’s vital to hire the right people. And that means being aware of the biases that can sabotage successful hiring:

Confirmation bias: Once you have a favorable impression based on one factor, such as the school someone attended, you tend to hear only comments that confirm your good impression.

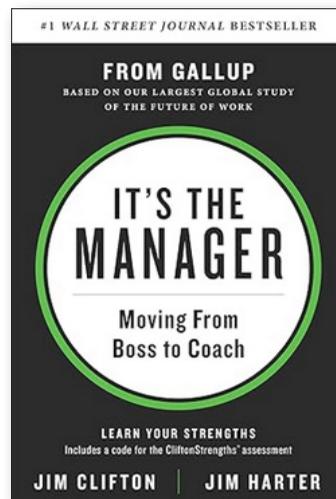
Overconfidence bias: You believe you can follow your gut to choose someone.

Glare factors: You give disproportionate weight to surface characteristics, such as how candidates look, dress, and present themselves.

Similarity bias: You hire people because they’re a lot like you.

Commitment bias: You move forward with someone just because you’ve already invested a lot of time and energy in the process.

To overcome these and other biases, use the following approach:



“Your success has deep roots in growth.”

Collect background information on candidates. Look for experience that aligns with the work they’ll be performing.

Evaluate candidates on five traits:

- **Motivation:** drive for achievement
- **Workstyle:** organizing work for successful completion
- **Initiation:** taking action and inspiring others to succeed
- **Collaboration:** building quality partnerships
- **Thought process:** solving problems by taking in new information.

Research shows that these five traits predict success in any job. You can screen for these traits using Gallup’s web-based assessments.

Conduct multiple interviews with candidates, and have several people conduct those interviews to reduce the bias of a single-interview or single-interviewer approach.

Find information about candidates’ job successes. Look especially at internships and other project-based experience. Collect ratings from their former supervisors and peers. 

Questions to Ask about Managing Change

In *The Change Guidebook* (Health Communications, Inc., hcibooks.com), Elizabeth Hamilton-Guarino offers insights about change, along with exercises, points to ponder, and questions to ask, including:

How would you like to change yourself for the better? What actions could you take right now that would remove roadblocks to your goals? Which of these goals is the most important?

What are your core values – the essence of who you are? Are all your choices in line with those values?

How could you manage your time better? What could you do to make sure you focus your energies on what’s truly important?

Would you like to collaborate with someone? Who?

What situations cause you to become impatient? Write down a few times you were impatient recently. What made you lose your patience? What might you do to stay patient and mindful?

Are there habits, behaviors, or ideas you could let go of that would empower you and those around you?

How will you sacrifice, eliminate, and change things to support your beliefs? Are you taking positive action each day or perpetually contemplating? Do you invite improvement? Your success has deep roots in growth. As you grow, you become wiser and learn what produces positive results and moves you toward your vision.

Are the people around you encouraging you and helping you achieve your goals, or holding you back? Who might you reach out to for help? Who would hold you accountable? 

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Seeking Social Justice through Narrative

Historically, a white supremacy thread ran through mainstream media in the United States and it persists today. It has become so normalized that we tend to take notice of only the most extreme circumstances. A legacy of fear of, dominance over, and disregard for marginalized people endures, othering, excluding, and exploiting people. Even the assumptions in which the nonprofit sector operates often perpetuate subtle forms of supremacy culture through entrenched behaviors and actions, usually without us realizing it, such as how we honor the “white savior” philanthropist and “heroic” leaders. And when we take the economic system and other unequitable parts of culture for granted, we may unwittingly be complicit in sabotaging our own missions for change.

Assumptions based in outdated norms have become a part of the culture, economic system, and organizational structures. The supremacist narrative took a long, insidious journey to develop and is entrenched enough that it’s likely to take a long time to unravel. *Rising Up: The Power of Narrative in Pursuing Racial Justice* (citylights.com), by Sonali Kolhatkar, considers how the media, such as news outlets, the entertainment industry, and other forms of transmitting information, perpetuate stereotypes, oppression, and a diminished voice of a large proportion of the citizenry through how stories are told.

“The story can change to bend the arc of history toward justice.”

Controlling the narrative – the way we frame our stories – reflects values. Those who believe people are self-indulgent by nature and need to be directed on how to function with others want to conserve a controlling, hierarchical power structure. The narrative is skewed through the subjugation of power, threats to conform, or minimizing the use of terror by those desperately trying to cling to power.

On the other hand, those who believe that people want to be valued and do good in society act as part of a community by sharing power and information. Kolhatkar demonstrates how the public narrative is changing as marginalized people claim their voice and redirect it to power community toward a different, more just point of view.

When we express creativity and focus on bottom-up change, the collective voice shifts to become more inclusive, balanced, and relevant. A social justice narrative can change how society views itself but must do so through a relational process, not through social structures attempting to wield power. While this book certainly outlines the harm done to marginalized people by the existing narrative – and how that damages all of us by extension – *Rising Up* goes beyond simply identifying harmful narratives. It also demonstrates how the predominant story can change to bend the arc of history toward justice. 

–reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Beyond the Briefs

To explore issues raised in these briefs in more detail, take a look at these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

Overcome Unconscious Bias in the Hiring Process (Vol. 39, No. 3)

How to Get More from Your Banking Relationship (Vol. 33, No. 3)

The Perils of Problem-Solving – & How to Dodge Them (Vol. 40, No. 1)

When It Comes to Time Management, It’s All about Energy (Vol. 36, No. 4)

Fighting Harassment & Improving Inclusion (Vol. 36, No. 2)

Be a Better Leader by Being a Careful Listener (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Embrace Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice (Vol. 36, No. 2)

Do You Have the Key Traits of a VUCA-Proof Leader? (Vol. 37, No. 4)

A Path to Stronger Programs, Greater Engagement, and Less Burnout? (Vol. 36, No. 1)

Moments Matter: A Three-Part Strategy to Leverage Your Time (Vol. 40, No. 1)

Take the Gamble Out of Hiring with Assessments (Vol. 25, No. 4)

Outside the Comfort Zone (Vol. 25, No. 3)

Best Practices to Budget (& Spend) for Marketing (Vol. 41, No. 3)

Life after the Pivot: Storytelling to Refresh Your Nonprofit Outreach (Vol. 39, No. 2)

Dealing with Change in a VUCA World (Vol. 37, No. 4)

Three Good Things (Vol. 29, No. 1)

The Risky Six: Keys to Shed Fear & Take Smart Risks (Vol. 40, No. 2)

How to Make the Best Decisions (Vol. 42, No. 1)

