

# 101

## THINGS TO DO BEFORE THE NEW MILLENNIUM

1. Develop a personal credo. Document your beliefs, and use them to form your own philosophy for organizational leadership.
2. Conduct a quick survey to see if everyone on your board and staff knows what your organization's mission and vision are.
3. Contact your city's community foundation and United Way. Ask them to put you in touch with other nonprofit organizations interested in collaborating in order to share resources, save money, and make a greater impact.
4. Set up an endowment fund for your organization. Create an investment committee, made up of board members, to decide how best to invest your organization's assets.
5. Call your local trade school or college and ask them to post a notice that you are seeking interns.
6. Engage in entrepreneurial activities. Look for corporate partners to help you market your products and services.
7. Celebrate successes. Hold small celebrations—pizza lunches, bagel breakfasts, occasional restaurant splurges—to recognize all the good that's happening in the organization.
8. Organize a systematic campaign to obtain corporate resources, such as in-kind gifts, corporate volunteers, free meeting space, research and computer facilities, staff training, and equipment.
9. Take an objective look at your communication style, and consider ways to get along better with people who have different styles.
10. Make sure all your meetings are productive and don't waste people's time. Stick to time frames and agendas.
11. Spread not only your own organization's story but also the message of other nonprofits and the value of the nonprofit sector as a whole.
12. Set up a suggestion box for your employees. Give a prize for the best suggestion of the week.
13. Create a written fundraising plan, specifying how much money you expect each board member to raise.
14. Hold a board-staff retreat at which you review your mission and vision statements.
15. Contact your local senior center and ask them to post notices that you are seeking volunteers.
16. Negotiate prices on your lease. Check into whether owning a place (perhaps in collaboration with other nonprofits) may be more cost-effective than renting.
17. Start a support group with similar-minded nonprofit leaders to share ideas and give one another encouragement and feedback.
18. Create a written communication plan, assuring that everyone in the organization is kept informed about what's happening.
19. Set educational goals for yourself and others in your organization. Sign up for the Learning Institute's Certificate Program in Nonprofit Leadership and Management. Call 800-257-2578 for details.
20. Take a step toward financial stability by making sure everyone in your organization shares in controlling the budget and minimizing costs.
21. Set up a financial control system to protect your organization's assets.
22. See if you can reduce your organization's mission to 20 words or less. Use plain, jargon-free language.
23. Start a newsletter for board members, donors, and other stakeholders.
24. List your organization's five most important audiences, and consider how to target messages directly to each of these audiences.
25. Create a technology plan, detailing what kind of technology

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- gy you want your organization to have next year and five years from now.
26. Invite a colleague from another nonprofit organization to lunch. Discuss ways you might share resources, collaborate on a project, or plan a joint venture. Be open to unexpected ideas.
  27. Set up an outcome measurement system to evaluate the results of each of your programs and services.
  28. Practice participatory management. Eliminate any organizational process that controls rather than empowers staff.
  29. Search the Internet for funding ideas.
  30. Pinpoint areas of your work that are crying out for innovation. Improve the environment for risktaking in those areas.
  31. Swap a board member with another nonprofit board for a few months. Share the results.
  32. Dust off your strategic plan and see if you're on track. If so, celebrate. If not, gather key staff, board, and constituents to create a new plan with action steps that will actually get done.
  33. Place random calls to 10 people your organization serves. Ask them to evaluate the quality of service they received most recently from your organization. Circulate the results to the rest of your organization.
  34. Spend half an hour every day gazing out the window. Close your office door, turn off your phone, ignore the papers on your desk, and dream a little.
  35. Send a survey to your customers to determine their satisfaction with your organization. Incorporate their ideas into your plans.
  36. Look into creative staffing ideas, such as part-time, flex-time, teleworking, and outsourcing.
  37. Be alert to changes that signal new trends, and find ways to tie your mission to those trends.
  38. Count how many sources of income your organization has. If you don't have at least four different sources *in addition to grants*, add at least one more funding source such as earned income, dues, planned giving, individual solicitation, and corporate collaboration. Use the Society's funding readiness guide (*Are You Sitting on a Gold Mine?* available on page 23) to choose the best income sources for your organization.
  39. Do at least one thing differently every day, whether it's a new route to work or new seating at your staff meeting, to gain a fresh perspective.
  40. Decide if you want to create your own Web site to reach a large new audience of potential supporters.
  41. Resolve that you will reinforce your organization's defining messages in all you say and do.
  42. Prepare a clear-cut plan to follow in case of a crisis.
  43. Ask each of your major donors for names of prospective donors. Vow to follow up on these leads and to double your major donor base.
  44. Explore ways that local colleges and high schools can offer valuable services to your organization.
  45. Implement an exit interview procedure to discover how people feel about working at your organization.
  46. Hold a financial planning seminar, open to the community. Invite your attorney, financial planner, or planned-giving professional to speak. Be sure to get the names and addresses of all attendees, and follow up with them as potential donors.
  47. List three top strengths for each employee in your organization. Think of ways to make the best use of those special talents..
  48. Get the best technology for your organization's needs. Coax board members to raise funds to pay for technological expertise, or find other creative ways to be sure you're on the cutting edge.
  49. Approach a corporation or foundation not as a funder but as a partner in solving a community problem.
  50. Read *Nonprofit World* cover to cover, and jot down at least three things you'll do differently as a result.
  51. Barter goods and services with other organizations.
  52. Keep everyone in your organization up to date on what things cost, and encourage them to find more efficient ways of doing things,
  53. Keep a database of organizations that provide services and products for nonprofits, along with details of what they offer. Turn to these resources for advice and direction whenever you start a new project.
  54. Add at least one new way—such as electronic fund transfer, monthly pledge systems, Internet giving, coupon books, and preauthorized donation checks—to make it easier for donors to give.
  55. Set up a salary and bonus plan based on performance targets.
  56. Review your brochures, fundraising letters, and promotional materials to be sure each one is written in concise, inclusive language with a clear, easy-to-follow call to action.
  57. Call a major donor, and say thank you.
  58. Make a list of your values. Then consider ways to put each of these values into action.
  59. Ask the board president to lunch. Use each other as sounding boards for issues you're tackling. Nothing adds to an organization's success more than frequent interaction between its top managers and leaders.
  60. Set up teams to help solve organizational problems.
  61. List ways in which you're exceeding the expectations of your funders and clients. If you can't think of any, set some

more ambitious goals.

62. Cut out or scale back programs that aren't cost-effective.
63. Implement a flexible benefit plan which will control health care costs and let employees tailor their benefit packages to meet their own needs. (See "Fourteen Keys to Fiscal Stability," *Nonprofit World*, March-April 1994).
64. Invite your donors to tour your facility.
65. Be sure you're ready for January 1, 2000. Create a Plan B to serve your clients if the year 2000 bug causes the usual systems to fail.
66. Ask board members to write personal letters to their friends and associates and follow up with phone calls—or, better yet, personal visits—asking for support for your organization.
67. Spend a few minutes talking to everyone in your organization and getting to know each person's interests, values, ideas, and dreams.
68. Create an effective benefit plan, including a retirement plan for employees.
69. Concentrate on board development. Analyze what's missing on your board and seek out people who can fill in those gaps.
70. Brainstorm ideas for a business your organization could start to bring in more income.
71. Form alliances with public relations firms.
72. Check to be sure that your organization's mission is at the center of all your organization's communications.
73. Take photos of your group in action. You'll find hundreds of uses for them.
74. Hold regular meetings of board, staff, and volunteers. Make meetings fun as well as informative.
75. Review the *Resource Center Catalog* and the *Directory of Service & Product Providers for Nonprofit Organizations* in every issue of *Nonprofit World* to find resources that may be helpful for your organization.
76. Be sure when people ask, "What does your organization do?" that you have one or two sentences ready that will capture their imagination, not put them to sleep.
77. Bring in a microwave and refrigerator and arrange an attractive place for employees to eat together.
78. Ask your donors to consider including a bequest to your organization in their wills.
79. Go to a meeting of professional communicators, and get to know a few of them so that you'll have friends to call on when your organization needs publicity.

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80. Search out new technology that challenges conventional wisdom about what can and can't be done in your area of expertise.
81. Set a good example by encouraging, praising, and appreciating people. Don't condone belittling or blaming.
82. Subscribe to a publication that will keep you abreast of societal trends.
83. Consider expanding your organization's mission and vision to become more global and inclusive.
84. Make a play date with yourself—a short break from serious business. Go to a museum, dime store, zoo, park, playground, or whatever environment will help you get in touch with your creative self.
85. Be sure your personnel handbook is up to date and that a lawyer has checked it over.
86. Volunteer to speak about your organization at a Rotary luncheon.
87. Arrange a party for board members and their families.
88. Become friends with local bankers so that they're there when you need them and so that they learn to understand and value the nonprofit sector.
89. Encourage your staff to take risks and be creative.
90. Identify five issues that can bring your organization respect. Write a speech on those issues, and arrange to give it in your community.
91. Seek new opportunities to collaborate wherever you go.
92. Develop a board plan that requires a positive net revenue in the budget for each fiscal year and a cash operating reserve of at least 90 days.
93. Plan an annual luncheon for employees.
94. Review your entire operation, looking for ways to streamline, innovate, diversify, and collaborate.
95. Study the environment, both local and global, to see if you're in tune with current and future changes.
96. Subscribe to at least one business publication, such as *The Wall Street Journal*, and start viewing the world like an entrepreneur.
97. Set both short-term and long-term goals. Lay the groundwork now for changes you anticipate in five and 10 years.
98. Join with other nonprofits to advocate for changes favorable to the nonprofit sector.
99. Find partners to help fund your computer use. Talk to funders, high-tech companies, and universities about the possibilities.
100. Take steps to create a multicultural, diverse board and staff.
101. Be passionate about your organization's work, and share that passion with everyone you meet. ■