

Seven Ps for Sustaining Success

Are these vital keys in place in your organization?

BY JOSEPH C. SANTORA AND JAMES C. SARROS

Times are tough for nonprofit organizations. To adapt to environmental changes, your organization must become more engaging and aggressive. You must devise new, innovative strategies. You can do so by implementing these seven Ps:

1. Planning

Understand that planning is the key to your organization's longevity. Set a direction by responding to these fundamental questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How will we get there?

View planning in both the short (less than one year) and long (preferably five years) terms. Assess internal strengths and weaknesses and external threats and opportunities.

Include all major organizational players in the planning process.

Address the often-neglected issue of succession planning at all organizational levels, starting with the executive director. Such planning will allow for smooth transitions rather than disruption and chaos when people leave the organization.

2. People

Remember that people are your organization's lifeblood. Create a people-friendly organizational culture with clear values and a focus on diversity and teamwork. Respect differences while building on commonalities.

Hire a diverse pool of talented people with the skills to foster growth. Draw new employees from undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare students to pursue careers in the nonprofit sector, or make use of "executive loan" programs, which give business executives a one-year "corporate sabbatical" to work in a nonprofit organization.

Compensate your workers with more than money. Give them opportunities to work flexible hours, work at home, job-share, and take courses.

Provide feedback, recognition, and praise for people's work. Celebrate every success.

3. Proposals

Take time to make sure your funding proposals are clear, well-written, and free from jargon. Never submit hastily written proposals to a funding source.

Be certain that proposal development flows from your strategic planning process.

Do research on funders before submitting proposals. Find a funder whose mission, values, and goals complement those of your organization.

Gear your proposal to the funder's needs, not to your organization's needs.

Put together an internal screening committee to review completed proposals for quality control.

Monitor the status of your proposals at all times.

4. Programs

Make sure your programs fulfill two purposes: (1) Generate enough income to sustain themselves. (2) Make an impact by addressing a compelling need.

Connect each program to your organization's mission and vision.

Know your market niche, remembering that you can't solve every social ill. Tackling an area outside your organization's expertise may hinder rather than help recipients of your programs. Work from your strengths, and forget the rest.

Evaluate your programs often. Use such measures as service outcomes, staff morale, funding base, and fiscal balance to decide if programs are still feasible. Don't hold on to programs that are no longer relevant and effective.

Use surveys and focus groups to gauge people's reactions to your current programs and their need for new programs.

5. Partnerships

Embrace the idea of collaboration. Funders are more likely to fund proposals that focus on collaboration.

Look for a partner whose philosophy and values are compatible with those of your organization.

When forming a partnership, be sure trust is present on all levels.

Create interlocking boards with your partner—joint appointments of a key staff person to each other's board of directors.

6. Politics

Realize that politics and nonprofits are inexorably linked. Politics is all about making contacts and forming relationships. Getting to know the right people is the best way to gain the money and power your organization needs. Accept the fact that people are more likely to support organizations whose leaders they know and trust.

Ask board and staff members to write down everyone they know who might help support your organization. These contacts may include people on foundations or corporations, in the media or legislature. Then cultivate those relationships.

Make every attempt to invite potential supporters to visit your organization and see it in action.

Don't focus only on money. People can support your organization in many ways—solving problems, putting in a word with the right people, supplying goods and services.

Once you've formed a relationship with a supporter, nurture it in every way. Keep supporters on your mailing list, and ask them to your functions. Let them know how your organization is doing and how their support has helped.

7. Publicity

Promote your organization's accomplishments in as many different media as possible.

Build relationships with media representatives.

Host community events.

Bestow awards on community activists and businesspeople.

Invite public figures and media representatives to your events.

Appoint influential people to your board of directors.

Prepare and distribute a high-quality annual report.

Inform the public about your programs through PR campaigns in local and statewide newspapers. Such promotion is an excellent way to attract funding and build your organization's reputation. Remember that nothing succeeds like success. ■

Resources

Lauer, Larry, "Are You Using the Power of Focus Groups?", *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 14, No. 4.

Muehrcke, Jill, "Build a Powerful Staff Team," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 18, No. 4.

Remley, Dirk, "Relationship Marketing: Guaranteeing the Future," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 14, No. 5.

Setterberg, Fred & Kary Schulman, "Finessing City Hall: Coalitions, Lobbying, and the Question of Power," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 6, No. 1.

These resources are available from the Society's Resource Center, www.snpo.org.

Joseph C. Santora, Ed.D., is managing director of DCG (P.O. Box 1291, Normandy Beach, New Jersey 08739, TSTDG1@aol.com), a nonprofit consulting firm. James C. Sarros, Ph.D., is professor of management, School of Business & Economics, Monash University, Caulfield, Victoria, Australia. He is a leading expert on leadership in Australia.

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