

Your TO-DO LIST for the Coming Year

Follow these 15 tips to live up to your organization's true potential.

Check if you're doing these things already. If not, decide which ones to make a priority. Doing even a few of these things will set you on a winning path.

— **1. Create a learning plan** for yourself and your organization. First, assess your organization's learning needs to decide which areas need bolstering. Next, consider possible training methods—formal training, informal peer training, videotapes, mentoring, consultants, university-based resources, books, Web-based training, or any of a variety of distance-learning methods. (See “Resources”). Next, decide who in your organization will participate in which opportunities. Arrange for individuals to share their learning with others in the organization. Create an atmosphere that encourages lifelong learning.

— **2. Set up suggestion boxes.** Gather feedback constantly from your staff, board, and clients. Follow through on their ideas.

— **3. Consider new ways** to use the Internet to raise funds. Solicit donors through e-mail. Register with online shopping malls that share commissions with nonprofits. Benefit from online auctions or other co-promotions sponsored by Amazon, E-bay, Yahoo, and the like. Create a monthly e-mail newsletter. Take the initiative, and suggest partnering with a for-profit or nonprofit Web site. Look into creating your own site. If you already have a site, check it for usability and timeliness, add hotlinks, and list it with search engines and directories.

— **4. Make the most** of your board of directors. Be sure all board members support your organization financially, help raise money, and use their contacts in the business world to find corporate sponsors and in-kind giving opportunities.

— **5. Become more entrepreneurial.** Look at the things your organization does well, and decide how you can use those skills to make money. Be willing to take risks, and help your board understand the need to take reasonable risks to serve your mission.

— **6. Train all those involved with your organization,** from the receptionist to the board president, to be marketers and customer-service representatives for your organization. Show them how to focus on fulfilling the organization's mission and spreading its message in every one of their relationships and exchanges.

— **7. Reduce the risk of lawsuits** that could devastate your organization. Keep your offices free of hazards such as slippery surfaces or loose carpeting. Screen new hires carefully. Keep good records and written policies. Make it clear that discrimination and harassment are forbidden. Address complaints promptly. Keep up to date on non-profit law and risk management.

— **8. Include your employees** in decision-making. Give them the power to act and the information they need to make good decisions. Ask for their help in planning programs, creating budgets, resolving conflicts, and keeping morale high.

— **9. Lighten up.** Think of ways to add humor, laughter, and fun to your relationships with your staff, board, and all your organization's supporters.

- **10. Be sure you have a brand**—name, slogan, colors, logo—that tells the world who you are. Check that your brand appears on all your products—letters, e-mails, faxes, media releases, voice mail, Web site. Focus on creating name recognition rather than giving lots of information about your organization. Update your brand if necessary. A powerful brand will unite donors, partners, employees, and other supporters around your organization's values and goals.
- **11. Turn everyone in your organization into a trend tracker.** Ask staff and board to help you scan the outside environment to foresee changes. Take action to meet those new directions before they occur. In all your goal-setting, keep your eye on the future.
- **12. Get some new perspectives.** Do at least one thing differently each day. Read one new publication every week. Go to meetings. Talk to new people. Take time to sit back, think creatively, and see the big picture. Plan a retreat for your board, your staff, and yourself—one or two days strategizing and reflecting in a fresh setting.
- **13. Build relationships** with everyone who supports your organization (and everyone you *want* to support your organization)—your donors, potential donors, corporate sponsors, volunteers, staff—and don't forget the media. Encourage their feedback, and respond to their ideas. Hold get-togethers. Send updates on your programs

and progress. Say thank you often, and provide lots of recognition and reward. The key to raising money is to build relationships. The key to building relationships is to keep two-way communication flowing.

- **14. Add diversity**—not just of age, race, and gender but of ideas and attitudes—at all levels of your organization. Provide diversity training and equal access to opportunity. Respect and accommodate different cultures and developmental abilities. Reward innovation and new ideas.
- **15. Think collaboration.** Form alliances with as many organizations and companies as possible. Find common ground. Share equipment. Swap board members for a month or a year. Hold joint meetings and training sessions. ■

Resources

- Brinckerhoff, Peter, "Why You Need to Be More Entrepreneurial—and How to Get Started," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 19, No. 6.
- Frenza, JP & Leslie Hoffman, "Fundraising on the Internet: Three Easy Strategies for Nonprofits," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 17, No. 4.
- Muehrcke, Jill, "Reach Out and Train Someone: The Many Faces of Distance Learning," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 20, No. 2.
- Muehrcke, Jill, *Volunteer Liability and Risk Management*.
- Sturm, Paul, "Seven Rules of Successful Collaboration," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 18, No. 2.

These resources are available from the Society's Resource Center, 734-451-3582, www.snpo.org.

Coming Up

IN NONPROFIT WORLD

- Internal Marketing: The Key to Successful Volunteer Programs
- A Three-Step Approach to Managing Workplace Stress
- Us & Them: Decoding the Language of Nonprofit-Business Partnerships
- Don't Just Survive: Climb the Ladder of Success
- Gaining Members with Direct Mail
- Making the Business-Nonprofit Partnership a Win-Win
- LOP: A Model to Remove Board Members
- Attorneys & Nonprofit Consultants: Keep Their Communications Confidential
- The Seven Pillars of Social-Enterprise Success
- Scheduling Can Be Easy
- New Adventures in Volunteer Recruitment
- And Much More!