



How to Keep Moving Up in a Down Economy

A few key changes can make all the difference.

By Brittany Koper

Thriving in difficult times requires a combination of new strategies and adherence to the tried-and-true. Here are some guidelines to pave the way:

Keep your eye on the prize. Too many nonprofits stray from their original mission, breaking off into eight different directions with a feed-the-hungry program, a drug-

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rehabilitation program, a toys-for-children program, and so on. Stick to your original plan. If you want to feed hungry people, donate to an organization designed to feed the hungry. You'll do more good by writing a check than by creating a spin-off organization that has nothing to do with your original purpose.

Be informed. Know who your constituents are and how the economy has affected them. Be realistic about what this means for your organization. People may be interested in your cause but not quite enough to write a check. Be aware of that and take advantage of it. Ask them to donate something else that can be just as useful: their time. Volunteers can dramatically reduce payroll expense and keep your organization afloat during economic uncertainty.

Focus on quality, not quantity. What's important isn't the number of programs but the quality of the service you provide. Do your clients feel valued and appreciat-

ed? Are you adding value to their lives? Remember, it's not just material items that add value; it's the knowledge that there are people who genuinely care about their situation.

Fundraise constantly. Keep your donors informed and involved in what you're doing at all times. Find stories that will touch their hearts. Let them know that they're important and appreciated, whether they give \$5 or \$5,000.

Keep your options open. Remember that recessions don't impair everyone. Look for donors in industries that are still thriving. When you spot these businesses, look for opportunities to get your

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foot in the door through marketing and networking. View every successful business as a potential donor, and be proactive. Donations don't find their way to you; you have to find your way to them.

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