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volume 40 • number 4

Nonprofit World

Advancement Through Sharing

Rules to Live By in December

PLUS:

- Fundraising Do's & Don'ts
- Making the Most of Cross-Mentoring Groups
- The Power of the Reverse "Thank You"
- Preventing Embezzlement in Your Organization
- Is Your Board an Asset Or a Liability?
- Create a Smart Data Culture
- Why to Stop Interviewing Job Candidates
- The Failure of Brainstorming – & What to Do Instead
- Does Where You Bank Matter?
- The Quickest Path to Almost Everything

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P.O. Box 44173, Madison, WI 53744-4173
or muehrcke@charter.net.

FEATURE ARTICLE

There's so much going on in December that we can stress ourselves out and end up neglecting some important priorities. After all, December is when year-end giving takes place. It's a time to raise funds – and also to give back. Be sure to share the season's warmth and joy with everyone in your life – including your most important donors. **"Rules to Live By in December" (page 11)** will remind you where to put your focus.

ARTICLES

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DEPARTMENTS

SOCIETY for NONPROFITS
Advancing the nonprofit world together

NONPROFIT WORLD **is published by the Society for Nonprofits.**

The New Definition of Smart

What do we mean when we refer to intelligence? Usually we think of a person's IQ. But the truth is that we never think alone, as Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach make plain in *The Knowledge Illusion* (Riverhead Books, penguin.com/publishers/riverhead). We need to view intelligence differently – not as the triumph of one person but of the community.

That's why the best decisions are made in teams. And that's why the smartest person is the one who works best with others and contributes the most to the team. For keys to helping your team find success, see "Find the Glue that Binds Your Team" on page 22.

A fascinating study led by Anita Woolley reveals what leads to team success. Surprisingly, the researchers found that group cohesion, motivation, and satisfaction weren't relevant factors. What did contribute to success were how socially sensitive team members were, how often they took turns, and how many females were in the group. The more those factors were present, the greater a team's chance of reaching its goals.

When we understand intelligence in terms of teams rather than individuals, we can help people make better choices. "Nudging Better Decisions" on page 30 describes ways to facilitate good decision-making as part of a community of knowledge. The key is to change people's environment to urge them toward effective solutions.

One decision organizational leaders must make is who to hire. Although plenty of research shows that our way of hiring people is ineffective, we continue to use traditional methods because they feel familiar and comfortable – and because we overvalue our own decision-making prowess. Instead of relying on the wisdom of the community, we put our faith in our personal abilities to intuit the right candidate for the job. "Why to Stop Interviewing Job Candidates" (page 32) describes a better approach to the best hire.

"Each day we're bombarded with so much information that if we had no way to filter it, we'd be unable to function," say the authors of *The Knowledge Illusion*. We have to hope that the things we're filtering out aren't the ones we should be paying attention to.

Psychologist Franz Epting explains, "We use diagnostic tools to organize and simplify. But any classification you come up with has got to work by ignoring a lot of other things – with the hope that the things you're ignoring don't make a difference. And that's where the rub is. Once you get a label in mind, you don't notice things that don't fit within the categories that do make a difference."

> "We never think alone."

Our diagnostic tools can keep us from seeing what's right in front of us. Opening ourselves up to the wisdom of the group gives us the perspectives that help us look beyond that limited view.

Because no one individual can do or know everything, collaboration is essential for success. "Mastering the Mastermind: Making the Most of Cross-Mentoring Groups" (page 14) describes how forming a collaboration of mentors can help you tap into the greater knowledge of the community around you.

The Knowledge Illusion underscores the fact that humans are both brilliant and pathetic. The communal nature of intelligence can delude you into thinking you know more than you actually do. But by opening yourself to the power of the collaborative mind, you have the ability to access true genius.

Jill Muehrcke, muehrcke@charter.net

Five Things to Do Next Monday

Here are a few concrete things you can do right now to begin transforming your organization.

1. **Jot down the essential tips** from "Fundraising Do's & Don'ts for December" (page 13) to be sure you focus your attention on the right things during this busy season.
2. **List a few people** who you would like to have in a mastermind group (see "Mastering the Mastermind" on page 14.
3. **Use one or more of the examples** in "Why You Should Send Your Workers 'Back to School'" (page 30) to develop a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
4. **Ask everyone on your board** to take the risk self-assessment on page 9, and plan a discussion around the results.
5. **Take the first step in creating a smart data culture** by choosing an executive sponsor (see pages 6-7).

How to Know What's Scaring Your Team Right Now

Try this easy exercise to turn anxiety into productive dialogue.

By Karin Hurt

I was frustrated recently while leading a strategic planning retreat. I had a hunch we weren't getting to the heart of the plan we were considering. So I gave everyone an index card, with the letter H on the front and the letter F on the back. I asked them to write one "hope" they had for this plan on the front and one "fear" they had on the back.

I collected the cards and sorted them into themes. The hopes fell into a few categories. They hoped the strategy would lead to increased revenue and improve the brand. They were united in the vision of why this was important. Great. That's a vital start.

But what was really interesting were the fears, or should I say *the* fear.

There was no sorting necessary. Every single person was scared of *exactly* the same thing: Could they count on the other people in the room to execute this strategy well?

It was a crucial fear that was undermining our planning effort. But no one had brought it up.

After I read 2/3 of the cards out loud, the point was made. Yikes. If the senior team was this worried about one another's ability to execute, how would they convince others to take those risks?

Before they did anything else, they needed to talk about their concerns.

What happened next was pure magic. Once we made it simple and safe to talk about people's fears, they were able to bond in new ways, support one another, and work together to make our strategies work.

Use this tactic at your next meeting. Encourage people to talk about what's scaring them and see what difference it makes.

> "Every single person was scared of the same thing."

> "Is your team sharing their real concerns?"

Straight Talk about Emotions

Leaders too often ignore the impact of people's feelings not only in daily life but when making decisions, communicating vital information, making major changes, and raising funds. Reduce fear, motivate people, and use emotion to advantage with the tips in articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

- **Leading from Feeling** (Vol. 27, No. 1)
- **Fear & Memory** (Vol. 38, No. 4)
- **Nested at the Heart: A New Approach to Nonprofit Leadership** (Vol. 29, No. 6)
- **How to Add an Emotional Hook to Your Fundraising Letters** (Vol. 37, No. 1)
- **Dealing with Change in A VUCA World** (Vol. 37, No. 4)
- **Smart and Fast Are Not Enough: The Need for Better EQ** (Vol. 29, No 1)
- **Why Feedback Is the Key to Your Success** (Vol. 35, No. 3)
- **Overcome People's Resistance with These Steps** (Vol. 38, No. 3)
- **Leaders as Midwives Who Birth a New World** (Vol. 28, No. 5)
- **To Make an Impact, Improve Your Non-Verbal Awareness** (Vol. 38, No. 3)
- **How to Improve the Process of Change: The Sanctuary Model** (Vol. 28, No. 6)
- **Be a Better Leader by Being a Careful Listener** (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Karin Hurt, founder of Let's Grow Leaders (letsgrowleaders.com), helps leaders around the world achieve breakthrough results. She's the co-author of Winning Well: A Manager's Guide to Getting Results Without Losing Your Soul *and* Courageous Cultures.

How Should You Deal with a Merger Proposal?

As a board member, can you – should you – keep your organization from merging?

Q I'm on the board of a nonprofit organization that is in good shape financially and has very good programs. Another organization that is much bigger than ours wishes us to merge with them.

From 14 board members presently, we'll be able to have only two board members on the acquiring organization's board. I understand that there has to be a vote of 2/3 of our board for the merger to happen.

I am not in favor of this merger since we give families a choice of a smaller organization as opposed to a very large organization. What should I do?

> "You need to lobby your friends on the board."

A If you can round up more than one-third of the board to say no, you can stop the merger. If two-thirds want to proceed, they can do so. So if you really oppose it, you need to lobby your friends on the board to see if you can find enough to agree with you and stop the process.

Mergers in the nonprofit world usually take a long time to negotiate in order to make enough board members (and other stakeholders) feel comfortable with the proposal and understand how it will result in better, more efficient, and more effective services for the community. It doesn't sound as though the organizations have invested enough time in this proposal to reach that point, at least not with you.

There can be real advantages in combining resources, and you may just want to slow the process down in order to negotiate better protections for your programs. There are no absolutes, for example, on how many (or few) of your directors could serve on the surviving board. You may be able to structure the affiliation to keep the small-organization feel of your services. If you see any potential merit in the proposal, it may be worth continuing the discussion to reach a better result. If you don't, you just have to count the votes.

– Don Kramer, Nonprofit Issues, nonprofitissues.com

For more insights into whether a merger is right for you, see resources at NonprofitWorld.org, including:

A Merger Can Be a Great Opportunity (Vol. 40, No. 2)

Four Steps to a Merger (Vol. 33, No. 2)

Building Blocks for a Successful Merger (Vol. 31, No. 1)

please get in touch...

We would love to hear your response to anything in **Nonprofit World**, your comments about any aspect of the nonprofit sector, and your concerns about your daily work. Please get in touch in any of the following ways:

Drop us a note at: Letters to the Editor, Nonprofit World, P.O. Box 44173, Madison, Wisconsin 53744-4173.

E-mail to: muehrcke@charter.net

Please include your name, organization, address, phone number, and e-mail address. If you'd like your comments to appear anonymously, please let us know. We look forward to hearing from you!

Is It Wrong to Recognize Your Funders?

Should you, or shouldn't you, acknowledge your grantors?

Q For many years we've listed all the foundations that have made grants to us, by name, in our annual report. In addition, we've included the amounts they've contributed. We have a new board member who is a CPA, and he strongly suggests that we discontinue this practice. I was under the impression that funders wanted to see their contributions listed. What is your opinion?

A As is so often the case, there's no one "right" way to handle such donations, but there's nothing inherently wrong with listing your funders and the amount of their gifts. Have you asked the new board member why he wants to discontinue the practice?

The CPA I consulted on this matter clarified that such donations, while recorded on Form 990, aren't part of the public disclosure. So foundations could expect that their contributions would remain anonymous or, at the very least, that the amount of their contributions would be left unspecified.

It's always proper etiquette to ask donors – and this would include foundations – if they're comfortable with being named and, if so, if they're comfortable with the amount of their contribution – or at least the range within which that contribution falls – being made public. Conceivably, some foundations might want to remain under the radar. I would imagine that others would welcome the opportunity to be associated with your success.

The only way to know how any individual foundation feels is to raise the issue specifically – if the answer isn't already found in your grant agreement.

I'm assuming that you send your annual report to the contributing foundations. The fact that you've had no complaints to date seems to indicate tacit support of your policy by your current funders. I see no reason to discontinue this strategy going forward, assuming:

(1) that you are, in fact, getting permission to include the foundations, as well as direction on how to do that – for instance, listing name only, listing name and specific amount, or listing name within an amount category, and

(2) that your new board member doesn't have a compelling reason for not listing your granting foundations.

– Terrie Temkin, Ph.D., Founding Principal, CoreStrategies for Nonprofits, Inc., terriet@nonprofitmanagementsolutions.com, and editor of You and Your Nonprofit Board, *charitychannel.com*

> "It's always proper etiquette to ask donors."

WHAT'S UP ONLINE?

Would you like to discuss some of the issues addressed in ***Nonprofit World*** with other nonprofit professionals? Do you have questions to ask or expertise of your own to share?

Society for Nonprofits is actively engaged on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Find us on your favorite social media platform by visiting **social.snpo.org**

If you have any questions, contact Jason Chmura at jchmura@NonprofitWorld.org

Create a Smart Data Culture

Take a close look at the way you manage your precious data.

By Shaun O'Reilly

When Marketing General Inc. (marketinggeneral.com) asked nonprofit professionals what keeps them up at night, many said they had concerns about the quality of their data. This makes sense, because leaders rely on their data to make vital decisions.

What things can your data do for you? Here are a few:

Help you understand the behaviors, preferences, and interests of your constituents.

Better navigate the strategic planning process.

Establish core programming, marketing, and content necessary to achieve your objectives.

Analyze donor trends.

Show which fundraising tactics work and which don't.

Provide a comprehensive picture of individual donors, how often they contribute, what motivated them to donate in the first place, or why they chose to discontinue their contributions.

Help build a comprehensive fundraising strategy that includes outreach, acquisition, retention, and reactivation.

Considering its huge importance, it's a mystery why data management is given short shrift in so many organizations. Leaders need to have a data-governance strategy. They need a team that works together to create a smart data culture. To do so in your organization, consider the following steps:

Identify an Executive Sponsor

Every organization needs an executive sponsor – someone who understands that data management is *not* just IT's job. The role of this executive sponsor is to ensure that everyone in the organization recognizes the strategic value of the organization's data. Most employees won't pay attention unless they understand how the integrity of the data – its accuracy, consistency, and completeness – impacts the organization's work.

Create a Data-Governance Team

With the support of the executive sponsor, organizations should form a data-governance team. This cross-functional team should be made up of owners or super-users of data. For example, this team could include representatives from the development, membership, program, communication, and IT departments.

> "It's a mystery why data management is given short shrift."

Members of the data-governance team must be staff who are committed to using data to achieve the organization's strategic goals. The team's duties should include the following:

Plan how the organization will collect, maintain, and use data.

Ensure that staff and leaders have the data they need to make decisions.

Develop data-entry procedures that promote accuracy.

Create a data style to ensure consistency.

Write a user guide that explains how to handle different scenarios (such as what to do if an e-mail bounces, for example).

Review data-integrity reports to identify problems such as missing or invalid e-mail addresses.

Work with the IT department to arrange security-awareness training.

Ensure that internal systems comply with a high level of data security.

Appoint a Data Team Leader

The leader of the data-governance team must be a user of data but *not* part of the IT department. The team leader must take ownership of the organization's data and garner the support of staff leadership to champion and enforce data-quality practices.

Collect Donor Data

With data comes valuable donor knowledge. But it has a short shelf life. That's why it's so important for the data-governance team to follow a clear strategy for data collection, maintenance, and usage. Here are six principles to keep in mind:

1. Collect only what you can use. The more data you have, the more data you must keep clean, update, and migrate to a new management system when necessary. Review your forms to make sure you're not requesting needless data.

2. Gather data on a regular, systematic basis. Understanding the motivations, misconceptions, and trends of current donors is key to retention and future acquisition. Donor engagement levels change over time, so their data should too. Create a schedule for updating pertinent information.

3. Describe data's impact. People are more willing to provide information when they understand how it will be used. Emphasize how up-to-date data can help you understand donor preferences and thus provide more value to the communities you serve. Having stronger data helps you target the right donors at the right time and lower the costs associated with retaining current donors. If individuals understand the full impact of a data request, their privacy concerns should be alleviated.

4. Talk about data security. Become an industry leader on cybersecurity. Let stakeholders know the security of their data is a priority. Communicate your security prevention and awareness practices. Teach employees and affiliates how to implement their own cybersecurity.

5. Widen data-collection methods. You needn't rely on infrequent surveys to understand your donors. Learn their interests and preferences by tracking their engagement data. For example, measure donor retention rates, donor lifetime value, and donor conversion rates for different fundraising campaigns.

6. Measure progress. Decide on a data-integrity metric – a percentage of records with accurate and complete data. Identify the fields to include in that formula. For example, you might decide that a record is complete if it contains a name, valid mailing address, e-mail address, place of work, job title, average annual contribution, or other related details. Run data-integrity reports regularly, and share progress with colleagues.

Build a Lasting Culture

A smart data culture is one in which everyone values data, understands what data can do, and appreciates the data's role in successful fundraising. The first step is building a team to decide what information to collect, how to collect it, and what to do with it.

Shaun O'Reilly is vice president of marketing at MemberSuite (membersuite.com). He is an innovator in cloud-based association-management software (AMS) and intelligence solutions for member-based organizations of all sizes.

Give Your Data Some Love

Learn more with these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Mitigate Cyber Risks with the Right Security Controls (Vol. 36, No. 1)

Being a Force for Good with Advanced Analytics (Vol. 36, No. 2)

How to Measure Online Fundraising Success (Vol. 26, No. 1)

Organizational Culture: It's in the Walk, Not Just the Talk (Vol. 29, No. 6)

Put Your Data to Good Use (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Streamline Your Organization – & Raise More Money – with Online Forms (Vol. 36, No. 4)

Nine Surefire Ways to Lock Down Your Cybersecurity (Vol. 36, No. 3)

Is Your Board an Asset Or a Liability?

Is your board decreasing – or increasing – your organization's risk? Take this quick quiz to find out.

By Melanie Lockwood Herman

What's the board's role in risk management? A nonprofit board is:

- **a line of defense** – a powerful radar instrument that can help detect incoming opportunities as well as threats
- **a vision magnifier** – helping the management team see beyond the limits of their imaginations
- **an expertise treasure trove** – teams of subject-matter experts available to provide wisdom and insights as needed.

These board roles suggest that a board is a rich asset. But is that always the case? Or is it possible for a board to be a liability rather than an asset?

A chapter in *Rethinking Reputation Risk* by Anthony Fitzsimmons and Derek Atkins, titled "The Special Role – and Risks – of Leaders," shares a handful of powerful lessons about the role and risks of boards. These lessons include:

Boards are usually – more or less – cohesive groups of people. The trouble with truly cohesive teams is the risk of "social silences" – the tendency to ignore certain subjects the group perceives to be obvious or impolite.

> "Good luck can keep latent risks hidden."

Organizations fail when boards leave fundamental assumptions and attitudes unquestioned. In such organizations, boards neglect to question any management strategy that leads to results that board members desire and embrace.

Boards often ignore the role of luck in success. Why knock good luck? The authors explain that good luck can keep latent risks hidden.

A close-up look at some of the biggest risks facing complex organizations leads to a host of contributing concerns, including issues such as culture, incentives, communications, strategy, systems, recruitment, and character. These factors cannot be described or solved with cryptic entries on a risk register spreadsheet.

The above factors and influences in the risk landscape are the dramatic leads in your risk story. Fitzsimmons and Atkins suggest a simple equation to sum up the role of people in reputational disasters:

disaster potential = [error or omission] X [influence or power].

Referring to influence and power, the authors remind us that boards and executive teams have more of both than anyone else. Thus, they have the ability to cause more good or ill to the organization and its reputation than anyone else.

> "They can cause more good or ill than anyone else."

Viewing the board narrowly and unquestionably as an invaluable asset is naïve. Humble board leaders should recognize that they're part of the diverse risk landscape as well as part of the risk oversight capabilities of the organization.

Board Risk Self-Check

Consider these questions to come to terms with the risk roles as well as the real risks posed by your board:

Does our board as a whole welcome criticism and appreciate different views?

Does every member of the board welcome criticism and contrary points of view?

What subjects, topics, taboos, or risk concerns go unmentioned by the board? Why aren't these topics discussed? What can we do to bring these difficult issues to the surface so they can be discussed and possibly acted upon?

Does our board promptly take action when the actions of a board member (or members) undermine the cohesiveness of the governing process or team?

Are risks related to governance included in our risk reports?

Does our board accept responsibility and accountability for risks that arise from governance?

Does our annual board self-assessment process bring opportunities for improvement (as well as strengths) to the surface?

Board service is a fundamental pillar in every nonprofit organization. Under the best circumstances, the board contributes wisdom and perspective and humbly acknowledges how its work sometimes poses risk to the organization. But sometimes board members are naïve about risk and choose to focus solely on risks related to operations or staff activities. An enlightened board vows to understand and appreciate the complex risk landscape in which the organization operates. Once "on board" with the idea that their work poses risk as well, the board is in a strong position to provide the thoughtful risk oversight that every nonprofit mission deserves.

Melanie Lockwood Herman (melanie@nonprofitrisk.org) is executive director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center (NRMC). She welcomes your questions about reputation risk, governance risk, and the risk oversight role of the board.

Resources from NRMC (NonprofitRisk.org)

Not So Great Governance? Resolve to Reinvent the Board (RISK eNews)

The Garden of Risk Oversight (Risk Management Essentials)

Risk Oversight: Who Dunnit (RISK eNews)

Resources at NonprofitWorld.org:

What Is the Board's Role in Managing Risk? (Vol. 15, No. 5)

Planning for the Unforeseeable: How Smart Risk Management Provides Peace of Mind (Vol. 24, No. 2)

Seven Risk Questions for the Board (Vol. 33, No. 4)

Do Your Board Members Know Their Fiduciary Responsibilities? (Vol. 33, No. 1)

Risk Management: Slippery Slope Or Moral Imperative? (Vol. 16, No. 3)

How to Assess and Improve Your Board's Performance (Vol. 24, No. 1)

Fear & Memory (Vol. 38, No. 4)

Risks Get Riskier for Nonprofits: ERM Can Help (Vol. 38, No. 1)

Six Ways to Reduce Risk & Comply with the Law (Vol. 25, No. 6)

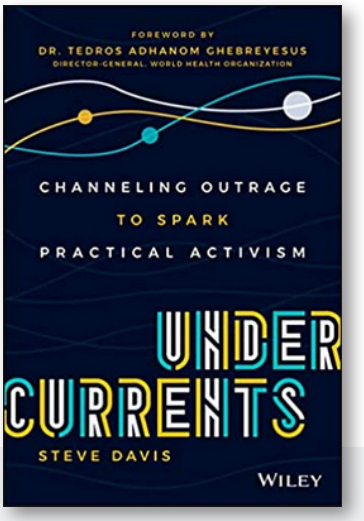
Conflict of Interest in the Board Room (Vol. 17, No. 2)

Nonprofits without Audit Committees Risk Disaster (Vol. 22, No. 2)

What Forces Are Driving Activism Today?

Five trends are reshaping our world in positive ways.

Reviewed by Terrence Fernsler



Undercurrents: Channeling Outrage to Spark Practical Activism. *By Steve Davis. Hardcover. 196 pages. John Wiley & Sons, wiley.com.*

Steve Davis's *Undercurrents* examines five trends that are affecting the direction of social innovation. To Davis, social innovation comes largely from within the dominant socio-economic system through technological advancements.

He notes how technology has improved our lives by offering conveniences our ancestors didn't have. Of course, this technology also has unintentionally given rise to productivity pressures, a widening socio-economic gap, and a hollowing out of the middle class. To call technological inventions by themselves social innovations arguably supports existing inequities.

Still, Davis makes many useful observations about current trends. For example, wholesale aid to nations is being replaced by interventions to the communities most in need.

> "Social-media communication can be used to divide us."

Access to technology in these communities is the low-hanging fruit triggering rapid improvement in community well-being. However, targeting aid in such a precise way risks shifting nationalist colonialism toward a neo-colonialism of under-represented populations, such as those in rural areas. This may further widen the gap in well-being between the extractor class and those being exploited.

As long as culturally based adaptations to new technology are disregarded, technological fixes alone won't create sustainable change. Likewise, social media have brought great changes in how we communicate; but, with little social control, the frame of that communication can be set by a minority and used to divide us.

Davis believes tweaking the dominant system with technology is the way to reform it. While this is necessary and is the tale preferred by those with privilege, it's not the only story that needs telling. Meaningful social innovation rejects the either/or debate between providing technological advances and social empowerment.

Five Undercurrents

Undercurrents are the tides invisible to those navigating the ocean's surface. The undercurrents shaping the work of activists are macrotrends that are creating "positive momentum to push us forward" through this decade and beyond, says Steve Davis. He pinpoints five undercurrents:

1. Global economies are moving away from the model of a pyramid, with low-income people at the bottom and a few wealthy ones at the top, toward a diamond, with more people joining the middle class.

2. Rather than being passive recipients of aid, communities are playing more of a role in shaping their futures.

3. The playing field is being leveled, as greater equity reshapes the field of social activism.

4. Digital tools are revolutionizing everything from healthcare to education.

5. Innovations are being scaled for widespread impact, giving middleware more importance.

To create meaningful change, we need those inside the system to work for technical reform and those outside the system to critique and disrupt it. This means there's plenty of space for nonprofit organizations – and for people within each nonprofit – to value both perspectives and re-learn the work of cooperation. By developing ways to blend technical improvements with social behavior, we increase opportunities for building community and egalitarianism.

Terrence Fernsler, MNPL, PhD, has been a nonprofit professional for over 35 years. He is currently an instructor and advisor in the James Madison University Nonprofit Studies minor program, an instructor in the Nonprofit Management and Leadership for the Master of Public Administration in the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University program, and principal of Sustainable Nonprofit Leadership Strategies.

Rules to Live By in December

It's the busiest time of year. Use these tips to stay both productive *and* sane.

By Gail Perry

December is a wildly busy time for many nonprofit folks. Isn't it for you, too? There are get-togethers to plan, gifts to buy, decorating to be done – and money to be raised. We're in the midst of the hectic year-end fundraising season. With things so demanding and stressful, it's hard to keep your head straight.

But there are ways to manage your workload in December. These simple rules will help you do so.

Be realistic about what you can and can't do.

The dream of perfection is nonsense. Do you really have to go all-out in every single area of your life and work?

Why not create a "Must Do" list and a "Would Like to Do" list? You can highlight the things you just gotta get done on the Must Do list. Then, you can let your "would likes" happen or not – it won't be the end of the world if you let some of them go.

> "Remember: 6% of all gifts come in during the last two days of the year."

For example, you might want to call every one of your donors and ask for year-end gifts – but is that realistic? Or, you might want to bake cookies (if you love to cook) for your favorite donors or colleagues – but do you *have* to do that? Your sanity and enjoyment are more important than having every single thing on the list checked off.

Follow these simple strategies for December at work.

Here are the top three things every nonprofit needs to do in December:

1. Go all-out to renew last year's donors.

Consider how much money is out there from your current donors, just waiting to be renewed. Focus your entire board and team on contacting these core supporters. They are your tribe – they believe in you. Don't let them slip away!

Gently reminding them to renew their support is the easiest ask of all. But here's an important caveat: You have to treat them like friends. Don't put them off by sending them a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

lofty, formal appeal letter. Would you send a formal letter to your own friend?

Remember, many of your loyal donors don't realize they're about to lapse. They may think they've renewed their support or they may have simply forgotten. So following up with them is the appropriate thing to do. It's not pushy or intrusive.

> "Here are the top things every nonprofit needs to do in December."

Your donors are busy and they need reminders. Schedule plenty of e-mails to be delivered the last week of the year. You need to be in their inboxes several times this month – and especially on New Year's Eve!

For your higher-dollar donors who haven't yet renewed, ask board members to write a personal note as a renewal reminder. Or pull in a volunteer team to make phone calls reminding donors about renewing.

2. Make sure you "touch" your major donors and funders.

Those foundation, corporate, and individual donors could be supplying over half your operating budget. And don't forget about government officials who allocate funding to you. Funding can come in from many different state and local sources as well.

The holidays are a great time to send a gracious greeting or a small gift of food or a plant. Don't make it too fancy. You just want to remind your top donors how much you appreciate them.

3. Set your donation page to be the main landing page for your website.

Did you know that 6% of all gifts come in during the *last two days* of the year? And most of these come online.

When donors search for you so they can make online gifts, what do they see? Does your home page make them hunt for the link to donate? Or does your actual donation page pop up first?

Just think: Anyone who visits your site at the end of the year is probably there for only one reason: to make a generous gift. So be smart. Take down that complicated home page for the last few weeks of the year. Make your actual donation page pop up first. Don't make people work to make their gifts to you.

Those three things are the top fundraising activities to worry about in December. If you focus here, you should be fine.

Add self-care routines to every single day.

There's a lot of conversation out there about having a happy, healthy nonprofit workplace. Remember the old saying, "If Mama ain't happy, then nobody's happy." If your energy is down, draggy, and dull, then you're not good for anyone.

It's hard work being a nonprofit leader. If you don't take care of yourself, you certainly can't be a spark to change the world.

Make time for the fun stuff.

Dang it, the holidays are about family, friends, gifts, and fun. You can choose to turn it all into "work." Or you can decide to move lightly through all the din and hustle, not taking any of it too seriously. Remember it's your own life; you yourself can choose how you want to experience it. What good is life as a human if you're not having some fun and happiness?

This season is all about joy and light. Provide warmth and fun for the people in your organization. Make room for the holiday message of hope and cheer in the lives of those you care about at work and in your life – and grab some fun for yourself while you can.

Gail Perry Group inspires nonprofits around the world with cutting-edge fundraising strategies and new tools to make fundraising more successful and more fun. Find smart strategies to help you raise tons of money at gailperrygroup.com.

> "Create a "Must Do" list and a "Would Like to Do" list."

Handle It All Like a Pro

These articles at NonprofitWorld.org will help you manage your workload, focus on the right things, and handle your holiday plans and year-end fundraising smoothly and successfully:

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

What Are the Three Most Boring Words in Fundraising Appeals? (Vol. 36, No. 2)

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

The Ben Franklin Program for Focusing on What's Important (Vol. 29, No. 1)

How to Add an Emotional Hook to Your Fundraising Letters (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Push the Clear Button to Eliminate Stress (Vol. 30, No. 5)

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

Think, Dream, and Do (Vol. 28, No. 6)

What's the Best Way to Recognize a Major Donor? (Vol. 31, No. 2)

E-Mail Mistakes that Could Be Damaging Your Fundraising (Vol. 36, No. 2)

Revitalize Your Thank-You Letter with a Good Story (Vol. 37, No. 2)

Top 10 Things Donors Want from Your Website (Vol. 38, No. 3)

Fundraising Do's & Don'ts for December

Do contact your top 10 donors from last year, and ask them to renew their gifts. Who knows? Perhaps that's all it will take to zoom over goal this year-end.

Don't ignore your major donors. Treat them like the insiders they are. Touch base with them over the holidays. See how they're doing, drop off a simple gift, and let them know you care about them.

Do remind your major donors about gifts of appreciated stock. Remember, only 1% of the assets in the U.S. are held in cash. The rest is in stocks, real estate, and other forms of investments. There are terrific tax advantages to donors when they make a gift of their highly appreciated stock.

Don't send a standard appeal to your top donors. Craft very personalized notes to them. Include an ask if it's appropriate – but make it a very, very customized ask. Make it feel kind and loving – a reflection of how they feel about you and your cause.

Don't send your donor a boring greeting card – one that's all about you. For instance, a picture of your staff wearing holiday garb and saying "Happy Holidays" couldn't be more uninspiring. (Yawn.) Instead, send a card that reflects your mission. For example:

- If you serve children, send a card drawn by a kid your organization has helped.
- If you're an arts organization, consider sending a card from the ballerinas or the actors.
- A school can send a card from the students.
- A hospital can send a card from the doctors, nurses, and patients.

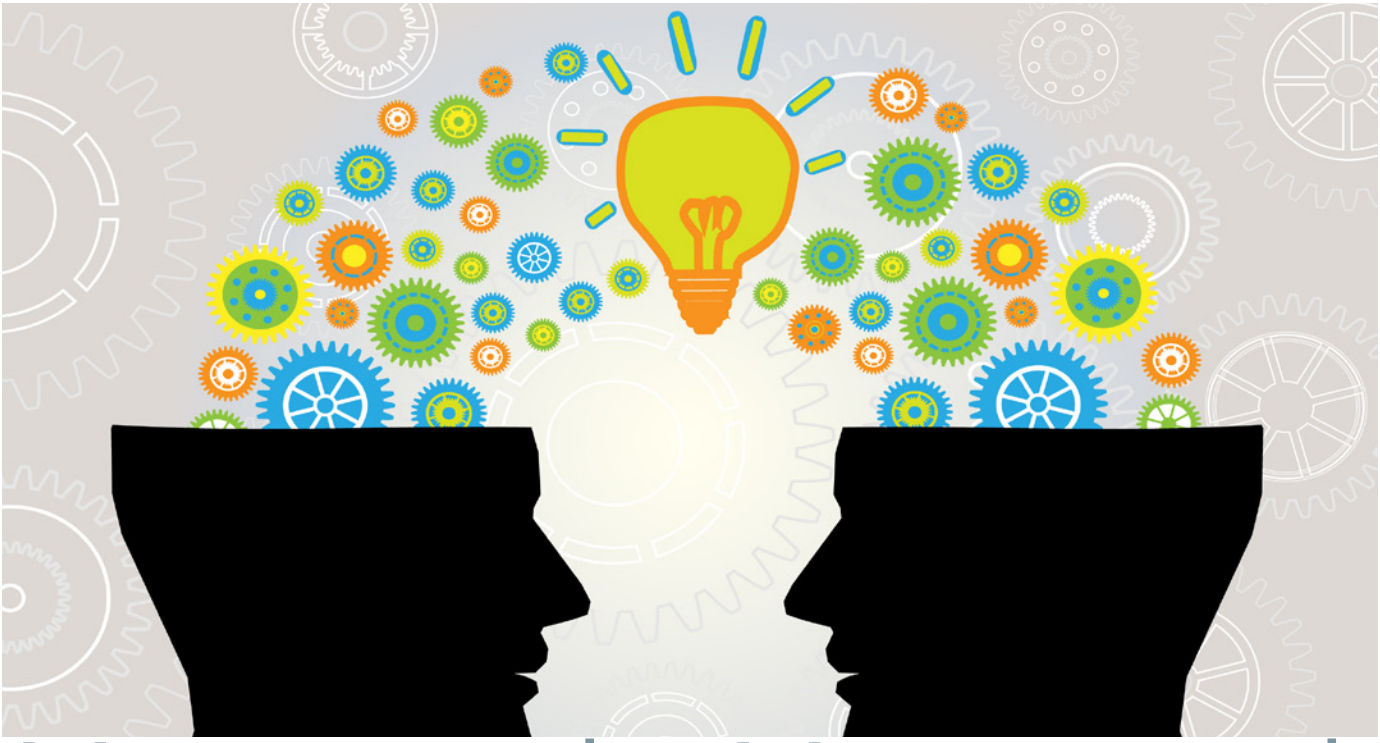
Make sure your greeting card triggers happy emotions in your donors' hearts and brings to mind the people your organization is helping.

Don't send out complex appeals that are hard to read and understand. Make your appeals skimmable, because donors are moving quickly. Your ask needs to be simple, straightforward, and tied to some measure of impact.

Do make it easy for donors to give online. The more boxes you ask donors to fill out, the less likely they are to complete their donations. When you make them hunt for the "donate" tab, you run the risk of frustrating them. When you make last-minute online giving an easy and efficient joy, you inspire people to give now – and again next year.

Don't shower your donors with data. Too many facts can overwhelm them. Donors give out of emotion – after you make a compelling case of need.

Do stay sane. Find some quiet and joy for yourself this holiday season.



Mastering the Mastermind: Making the Most of Cross-Mentoring Groups

Try this approach and see undreamed-of results.

By Elizabeth McCormick

A mastermind is a group of individuals devoted to mutual support, a sort of mentorship in the round, where each member plays the role of both mentor and mentee. The principles of a mastermind can apply to any group aimed at continuous improvement and personal development. The focus is on reciprocal benefit – enabling the success of others while in turn drawing on the resources of the group for yourself.

The mastermind concept comes from Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*, but the idea adapts to many forms of networking, not just entrepreneurs as originally foreseen. The philosophy of the mastermind suggests a new approach to group dynamics over traditional methods. The idea is to form an alliance whose common goal is to counsel each other, celebrate each other's successes, and serve as a sounding board, providing support in a safe and confidential environment.

Before you look at how to invest in a mastermind, look at four distinct takeaways an effective alliance can offer.

> "Being a nonprofit leader can be a lonely position."

1. Community. The most effective masterminds bring together people with both like and unlike backgrounds. The result is a new and diverse community that wouldn't exist otherwise. It's a community of intent, not chance, with members invited in for the strengths they can offer as much as for the benefits they can receive.

2. Collaboration. Being a nonprofit leader can be lonely. Where do you turn to express doubt or bounce ideas? A mastermind collective presents a safe sounding board for expressing concerns, doubts, and options, while providing input, feedback, and advice.

3. Consolidation. Networking is generally accepted as a key to growth, yet the processes required are often uncomfortable and many of us don't do them well. It's first-date syndrome; there's not enough time at a networking event to relax and be yourself. The mastermind structure checks that in a couple ways. First, everyone is there by strategic invitation. Next, everyone around you is interested

in your success as well as their own, for the good of the mastermind group. Opportunities to build effective cross-promotions don't have to develop on the fly in a couple hours. When you connect with a network partner on a deeper level, you're closer to their network now too, in a way a business-card exchange just can't match.

4. Motivation. Ongoing inspiration and motivation may be the two biggest benefits a mastermind has to offer. There are probably other sources for the new information you're learning through your mastermind group. But there's nothing like getting excited about an idea, direction, or plan that's then reinforced at the next meeting of your alliance. Think of it as an inspirational pep pill, keeping you nourished, nurtured, and invigorated on a regular basis.

No matter if you're joining a group, expanding an existing one, or starting your own, whether you succeed or fail, there's experience to be gained. Each mastermind can be enriching, even if it's not what you were expecting. Part of the process that's most valuable is that you're opening yourself up to other people and other experiences. Ultimately, while a mastermind is a group experience, you'll find the rewards are deeply personal. Good luck on your adventure!

Elizabeth McCormick (yourinspirationalspeaker.com) is a keynote speaker, author, and authority on leadership. She is the best-selling author of The P.I.L.O.T. Method: The 5 Elemental Truths to Leading Yourself in Life.

Think and Grow Wise

Apply the mastermind principles with these articles from NonprofitWorld.org:

Creating Breakthroughs (Vol. 26, No. 4)

Eight Steps to Managing Conflict (Vol. 20, No. 4)

Cynicism Rx: Authentic Communication (Vol. 24, No. 6)

Face to Face (Vol. 14, No. 1)

Manage for Today, Mentor for Tomorrow (Vol. 23, No. 5)

Creating a Values-Based Road Map (Vol. 23, No. 2)

Grounded Visioning: A Quick Way to Create Shared Visions (Vol. 26, No. 4)

Think, Dream, and Do (Vol. 28, No. 6)

Take It Up a Notch: Using Kaizen for Continuous Improvement (Vol. 37, No. 2)

Powerful New Communication Tool for Your Meetings: Engaging Both Sides of Your Brain (Vol. 26, No. 3)

Zen and the Art of Team Building (Vol. 20, No. 1)

How to Create Your Own Mastermind

List a few people you think would be good members of your mastermind. They may all be part of your workplace or drawn from other organizations or other parts of your life. You can begin with just one other person and grow your group slowly from there. You don't need more than two people, because the magic of the mastermind is that putting two minds together creates a powerful, intangible force that Napoleon Hill in *Think and Grow Rich* called a "third mind." He noted, "When a group of individual brains are coordinated and function in harmony, the increased energy created through that alliance becomes available to every individual brain in the group." By blending two or more minds into one, he said, "we can find the solution to a great variety of problems."

Examine your list. Ask yourself: What expertise does each person have? Do the group members include a variety of skill sets? Do they represent where you'd like to be in your life and career? And the two most important questions:

Do their core values resonate with you?

Will they encourage, inspire, and support you, helping you follow through with your goals and always having your back?

Invite your chosen group members to meet. Send them this article to explain what a mastermind is and what they will gain from joining.

At your first mastermind meeting, discuss the overarching plan and purpose of the group. In addition to mutual support and growth, what specific goals do you want to achieve? Give the group a name related to your purpose.

Ask each person to commit to coming to meetings, giving their full support to the group and its members, and sharing their expertise..

Set meeting dates. Plan to get together with your mastermind frequently, twice a week at first. It's essential to meet face to face, either in person or via Zoom. Between-meeting texts and e-mails are fine, but you won't create the bonds you need unless you see each other face to face.

Each time you get together with your group, spend time telling stories. These personal anecdotes can be about mistakes you've made and what they taught you, insights you've had, things you've experienced for the first time, or projects you've been working on. Listen carefully to other people's stories and help them see lessons and patterns in their lives. Include silly stories as well as the profound. Although the mastermind has a serious purpose, it's always good to laugh together, too.

Don't appoint a leader. Each person in the group will step forward and lead at certain times when appropriate, but everyone is a peer. If one person takes a dictatorial role, the collective brainstorming ability of the group will be severely compromised.

–from *Think and Grow Rich* and *Think and Grow Rich for Women* (PenguinBooks, penguin.com)

Preventing Embezzlement in Your Organization

These steps will make it easier to expose dishonest employees.

By William H. Devaney & Jeffrey S. Tenenbaum

Sadly, nonprofit organizations aren't immune from employee embezzlement. Because nonprofits tend to be more trusting of their employees and have less stringent financial controls than their for-profit counterparts, they fall prey to embezzlement and other forms of employee fraud at an alarming rate. By way of recent example:

A 10-year employee of a nonprofit organization, who worked her way up to CFO, used the organization's credit card to charge $184,000 in personal expenses, including casino charges.

A long-time nonprofit CEO embezzled $549,024, using the organization's credit cards and bank account for personal expenses such as foreign vacations, cosmetic surgery, and college tuition.

Nonprofits aren't defenseless, however. There are several proactive steps you can take to prevent and detect employee embezzlement.

Require Double Signatures, Authorizations, and Back-up Documentation

For expenditures over a predetermined amount, require two signatures on every check and two authorizations on every cash disbursement. Such layers of approval will make it far more difficult for embezzlers to steal from the organization.

If your staff is too small to implement a double authorization policy, consider having a volunteer officer or board director be the second signatory or authorization required. (Generally, an officer will be preferable to a director).

Be sure that all check and cash disbursements are accompanied by an invoice or other document showing that the payment or disbursement is appropriate. If the size of your organization allows it, the invoice or disbursement request should be authorized by a manager who won't be signing the check.

Never pre-sign checks.

With credit cards, require prior written approval for costs estimated to exceed a certain amount. The person using the card mustn't be the same person authorizing its use.

> "Control measures work only if someone is checking."

Segregate Duties

Hand in hand with multiple authorizations goes the segregation of duties. At a minimum, a different person should be responsible for each of the following tasks:

- **authorizing** payments
- **disbursing** funds
- **reconciling** bank statements and reviewing credit card statements.

If you don't have enough professional staff to segregate duties, a volunteer officer or board director should be tasked with reconciling the bank statement and reviewing credit card statements.

Because embezzlement also can occur when funds are coming into an organization, no single individual should be responsible for receiving, depositing, recording, and reconciling the receipt of funds.

By the same token, all contracts should be approved by a manager uninvolved and personally uninterested in the transaction (in other words, someone whose compensation won't be affected by the transaction). Whenever possible, contracts should be the product of competitive and transparent bidding.

Conduct Inventories

At least yearly, perform a fixed-asset inventory to ensure that no equipment or other goods are missing.

Carry Out Background Checks

Background checks on new employees and volunteer leaders can unearth things such as criminal records and prior instances of fraud. Background checks can also disclose heavy debt loads. Someone with a lot of debt may be more likely to succumb to fraud.

> "Nonprofits fall prey to embezzlement at an alarming rate."

Use Audits & Board Oversight

Control measures work only if someone is checking. Managers should make certain that the measures are followed. Scheduling regular audits will help ensure that the measures are effective.

Be sure to establish an audit committee on your board of directors – and make certain that this committee contains at least one accounting expert. That person should serve as the primary monitor of your anti-fraud measures. In lieu of an audit committee, smaller organizations should consider putting a CPA or other financially knowledgeable person on the board to serve a similar function.

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Step in to Protect Your Organization

Minimize financial risks with these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

- **Nonprofits without Audit Committees Risk Disaster** (Vol. 22, No. 2)
- **Want to Avoid Fraud? Look to Your Board** (Vol. 28, No. 5)
- **Setting Up a Control System for Your Organization** (Vol. 16, No. 3)
- **Trust: The Reason Screening Volunteers Is More Vital than Ever** (Vol. 37, No. 3)
- **Get Ready for a Better Audit** (Vol. 30, No. 2)
- **Protecting your Organization against Financial Misuse** (Vol. 17, No. 4)
- **Need a CPA at Little Or No Cost? Five Ways to Find Help** (Vol. 28, No. 2)
- **What to Do When an Employee Becomes a Cybercriminal** (Vol. 39. No. 4)
- **Are You Breeding the Conditions for Fraud to Occur?** (Vol. 39, No. 3)
- **Use Background Checks to Avoid Legal Pitfalls** (Vol. 29, No. 1)
- **Can Your Organization Afford to Lose $100,000? Safeguards Every Nonprofit Needs to Implement** (Vol. 30, No. 3)
- **Setting the Stage for an Abuse-Free Organization** (Vol. 30, No. 6)
- **How to Find the Perfect Auditor** (Vol. 22, No. 3)

Coming Up in *Nonprofit World*

- Four Tips to Build Trust through Writing
- Why on Earth Would a Major Donor Agree to Meet with You?
- Bring Yourself Fully to Your Nonprofit Role
- The Surprising Science of Meetings
- What Type of Language Professional Do You Need?
- The Deeper Way to Onboard New Employees
- The Two Missing Parts of Team-Building
- What Can You Learn from E-mail Lists?
- Manage Change: These Are the Keys
- Optimize Google Ads to Bring More Traffic to Your Website
- Tools for Leading with Presence
- Do You Have the Right People on Your Board?

Plus much more!

The Power of the Reverse "Thank You" – Influencing Others Made Easier

If you thank people only *after* the fact, you're missing half the power.

By Kate Zabriskie

Most of us like to be thanked, especially when the sentiment is sincere. For that reason, "thank you" is one of the most powerful phrases in the English language.

In addition to using it to recognize past acts, you can also say "thank you" to influence people's future behavior.

- *I know we all want to finish this meeting on time, so before we start I want to thank you in advance for sticking to our agenda. And thank you for being such an efficient, professional, and focused group. We couldn't ask for a better team!*
- *I want to thank all of you for your patience. Your fabulous attitudes make my job easier when we're running behind. Let me know if there's anything I can do to make the wait better for you or if I can answer any questions, and thank you again.*
- *I know you understand how important giving great customer service is to our success, and I appreciate how hard you work to be an exceptional staff. I want to thank you in advance for going the extra mile today. In particular, thank you for greeting people with enthusiasm, finding clever ways to delight them, and handling any problems promptly and professionally. Thank you again for your effort.*

Why Bother

Some people will argue that thanking people for doing what they're "supposed to do" is a waste of time. Chances are, however, those same people find themselves frustrated by customers, clients, board members, and co-workers who don't behave the way they should.

For those nonbelievers, the thank-you-in-advance method of influence is certainly worth a shot.

Why Thank You in Advance Works

Thanking people in advance works for three reasons:

People feel an obligation to reciprocate after they've received something.

We all want to conform to a positive image of ourselves. In other words, "I'm going to act like a good employee because I am a good employee."

A third explanation for the thank-you method's power has to do with instruction. Often, we assume people intuitively know what they're supposed to do. Guess what? Many don't, they've forgotten, they're preoccupied, or they're simply not thinking. When they know what you want, they'll usually follow your suggested course of action.

The Structure of an Advanced Thank You

To plan an advanced thank you, use the following framework:

1. Think about the desired result. "I want people to show up on time."

2. Identify the type of people who typically demonstrate that behavior. "Responsible and accountable people show up on time."

3. Craft a statement that identifies the people you're addressing as that group, and be specific about what you want to see.

> *I appreciate the fact that we have such a dedicated, conscientious team. I want to thank you in advance for giving 110% this week. The hours during the holiday season are demanding, and it takes a true group of professionals to act upbeat and engaged with every visitor, whether it's first thing in the morning or late in the afternoon. Thanks again for your diligence and dedication.*

Tips & Cautions

Thanking people in advance is part science and part art. The above structure provides a framework for your message. The specific words you choose, the tone in which you deliver them, and your timing are subjective. The following tips and cautions should help you get the most from the method.

You should thank people for good behavior before you've observed anything egregious. For example, imagine a chaotic scene where people at a fundraising event are pushing and shoving each other. It's more difficult to thank

> "Some gratitude offered earlier could have helped avoid mayhem."

them into a reverse course after they've gone wild. However, a little advanced gratitude offered earlier could have helped avoid mayhem.

Thanking people is not a substitute for confronting inappropriate behavior. For example, if an employee comes to work dressed improperly, you can't thank your way around addressing the problem. However, you can use "thank you" as part of the corrective conversation. "Mary, I appreciate you listening to me this morning, and I want to thank you in advance for taking the conversation seriously. I know you have what it takes to represent our organization well. I look forward to seeing you be successful here."

Thanking people for everything dilutes the method's effectiveness. "Bill, I want to thank you for coming in on time today. I know how important punctuality is to you, and thank you for parking in the employee lot and not taking a visitor's space. . . ." Too much of that, and Bill's going to think you've got a screw or two loose. Worse still, he's not going to believe a word you say.

There are some people with whom this method falls flat. They weren't behaving in a way we wanted before we tried it, and they're not behaving after the fact either. Fortunately, this group is small.

Perfecting the science and art of the advanced "thank you" takes time. The more you practice, the easier it is. Soon it will become a strategy your brain launches on autopilot.

I know you'll eventually be successful in getting this to work, and I want to thank you in advance for giving the method a try. Who will you influence first?

Kate Zabriskie is the president of Business Training Works, Inc. (businesstrainingworks.com), a Maryland-based talent development firm. She and her team help organizations establish customer service strategies and train their people to live up to what's promised.

More Ways to Influence People

For maximum impact, use a spectrum of strategies to steer people toward desired behaviors. These articles at NonprofitWorld.org offer a good variety:

Sneaky and Insightful Board Room Questions (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Three Simple Questions that Get Donors to Give (Vol. 35, No. 2)

The Five A's of Influence (Vol. 29, No. 3)

Secrets to Creating a Board that Makes Cash Gifts (Vol. 37, No. 2)

Leading from Feeling: Coaching Tools for Interpersonal & Organizational Excellence (Vol. 27, No. 1)

How to Tap into Purpose to Motivate People (Vol. 38, No. 2)

The Power of Your Messages (Vol. 32, No. 3)

How to Run the Perfect Board Meeting – While Inspiring Board Members to Raise Funds (Vol. 36, No. 4)

The Failure of Brainstorming – & What to Do Instead

"Brainstorming" is a catchy phrase for a wasteful endeavor. There's a better way to garner creative ideas.

By Meira Spivak

Brainstorming has never lived up to the hype, even from its onset. Created by Alex Osborn in 1953, the concept of getting a group together to "storm a problem" sounded good and caught on quickly. He laid out four steps that were necessary for proper brainstorming:

1. Defer judgment. Let people offer ideas that aren't judged immediately. There are no bad ideas.

2. Favor quantity over quality. It's better to come up with many lukewarm ideas than a few good ideas.

3. Build on the ideas of others. Don't negate someone's ideas. Build on them. Say, "Yes, and . . . ."

4. Prefer wild ideas. The crazier and more "outside the box" the better.

Osborn's brainchild gained widespread acceptance. But did the method work?

Only a few years later, in 1958, Yale University researchers were the first to prove that individuals working independently were more effective than groups at coming up with ideas. Many studies found the same thing – that people working alone or in pairs generated more creative ideas, often up to 85% better ones than large groups.

> "Constraints are an essential part of the process."

Why Brainstorming Doesn't Usually Work

There are three key reasons that Osborn's version of brainstorming doesn't work:

It's unproductive. In a group setting, one person speaks and the rest sit and listen. It's much more productive for people to work alone or in pairs and maximize the allotted time.

It breeds competition. In large group settings, people often try to undermine one another

People often feel reluctant to share their true thoughts in large groups because they fear being judged.

But people enjoyed brainstorming so much that they ignored the problems. Getting together as a group and shouting out ideas was far more fun than the usual meetings they had to sit through, so they added it to their schedules, even if it rarely offered any real breakthroughs.

Is there a way, though, to make brainstorming more effective so that we don't have to get rid of it altogether? Luckily, the answer is "yes."

Five Tips for Effective Brainstorming

1. Apply constraints. The common notion in classic brainstorming is to have participants throw out as many ideas as possible, the crazier the better. But research has taught that if we want to innovate, constraints are an essential part of the process.

Consider how useful constraints are to you each day. For example, you don't assume your budget is endless; you accept budget limitations and only suggest ideas that fit within it. You don't give the meeting a three hour window; you set a timer for 30 minutes and let the stress invigorate you. You don't assume you can create any type of event; you imagine the event will be appropriate for elders living in Florida on low sugar diets. Constraints, though they seem to impede creativity, actually set the stage for innovation.

2. Discard bad ideas. Traditional brainstorming teaches that there are no bad ideas. Every random thought should be considered and jotted down on the whiteboard, regardless if

> "Choose quality over quantity and save time."

it has any potential. But why? Why must we list ideas that are completely unrealistic? Stop feeling good about the length of your list and start listing only good ideas. Choose quality over quantity and save yourself time and heartache later.

3. Break the group into smaller discussion subgroups. This is key! For years we assumed that the more people we gathered together to brainstorm, the more innovation would emerge. Unfortunately this isn't the case. Research has found that five pairs of two people each yield 80% more results than a group of 10 working together. That number is truly outstanding.

Divide the large group into small, quiet breakout groups, ideally as small as two people each. After each person has had the opportunity to share in the smaller setting, bring all the groups back together for a larger group facilitation.

4. Zoom in on one aspect to brainstorm. Often when we try to innovate, we think of the topic as a huge insurmountable challenge. (Let's innovate a new type of conference, for instance. Or, let's create a new way of teaching kindergartners.) As with a camera, zoom in. Focus on one aspect instead of the entire project. (Try innovating the meals at the conference or the seating for the keynote speaker. Try innovating your kindergartners' homework system or the in-person drop off.) By narrowing in on a piece of the program, you'll see a new perspective and feel less overwhelmed.

5. Have people put their ideas on paper. Writing things down is better than asking everyone to call out ideas, because many individuals are self-conscious, shy, or afraid to look foolish, so they don't speak up. Only a few people's ideas got noticed when you rely on hearing people's shouts in a big group.

Because writing ideas down is so useful, this more effective version of brainstorming is often called "brainwriting." Here's how it works:

Hand out pieces of paper, and give people 10 minutes to attempt innovation. Then, have each person share their favorite ideas with the group. Place the best ideas on the board. This method gives everyone an equal opportunity to share and will produce a wider, stronger representation of ideas.

A seasoned speaker, Meira Spivak (meiraspivak.com) is known for motivating her audiences to take action. She teaches techniques in structured creativity using the SIT (systematic inventive thinking) method, which has helped hundreds of organizations reach creative solutions to pressing problems (see "The Quickest Path to Almost Everything" on this page).

The Quickest Path to Almost Everything

SIT (systematic inventive thinking) is a technique that helps you break "fixedness" – the tendency to see things only in the accustomed way. It's based on the idea that inventive solutions share common patterns, or templates, and by using those templates, you can be creative time and again.

Let's use cars as examples of how it works:

Subtraction: Look at your problem or the feature you're trying to improve, and mentally remove one part of it. For example, you might take the seats out of a van to turn it from a passenger vehicle to one configured for hauling equipment, thus serving two markets.

Division: Divide an existing feature into parts and then reconfigure the elements in a novel way. For instance, auto designers offer the option of a radio you can remove from the vehicle for security reasons.

Multiplication: Copy a component of the existing product or system but change it in a counterintuitive way. Auto companies, for example, add a second drive axel to a two-wheel-drive car to turn it into an all-wheel-drive car, thereby satisfying two distinct markets.

Task Unification: Give an additional responsibility to a product component. Unify tasks that previously worked independently of one another. For instance, car companies add a warning-flasher switch to the standard lights so that all the lights flash at once in an emergency.

Attribute Dependency: Think of ways to make connections between the attributes of a component and the environment. Consider, for example, how auto companies add a light-sensing component to your car so your lights will turn on automatically at night or on a dark, rainy day.

Lessons Learned

Discover other lessons we've learned about creativity by reading these articles, available at NonprofitWorld.org:

- **Spark New Ideas throughout Your Organization** (Vol. 39, No. 2)
- **Not Taught in Business Schools: How to Cultivate Creative Leading** (Vol. 24, No. 5)
- **Six Ways to Get Out of a Rut** (Vol. 24, No. 4)
- **Creating a Climate for Innovation** (Vol. 29, No. 4)
- **Outside the Comfort Zone** (Vol. 25, No. 3)
- **Seven Ways to Be Unreasonable** (Vol. 20, No. 5)
- **Making Much of Little: Turning Untapped Assets into Gold** (Vol. 36, No. 1)
- **Mind Mapping Is Essential for Leaders** (Vol. 38, No. 4)
- **Powerful New Communication Tool for Your Meetings: Engaging Both Sides of Your Brain** (Vol. 26, No. 3)

Find the Glue that Binds Your Team

It's in teams that things get done. Make sure yours is the best it can be.

By Joe Curcillo

Leading a team is about communication and organization. But most of all it's about getting to know your team members and finding the glue that binds them together. Let's look at the four steps that make up this essential "GLUE":

Gather information about the people on your team. Delve into the backgrounds and skill sets of each team member. Sometimes that information is available within the organization. At other times you're fortunate enough to know your team members. No matter how you acquire the information, learn what you can about what the players have done on other teams or within the organization at large. This background information is essential as a basis upon which you'll build the infrastructure of your team.

Now keep in mind: People change. Therefore, this collected information will be subject to modification as you watch the team come together during the life of the project. You should review and analyze the initial information as much as you analyze the project itself.

If the information you're gathering is subjective: Consider the source. Depending on who provided the information, it may or may not be accurate. Ultimately, it's in the next phase — as you listen to your team members and learn— that you'll begin to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your team in reality.

Artful leadership begins with a deep understanding of each team member's unique attributes. With that knowledge in hand, you're in position to help them work together for success.

Listen to team members to determine their interests and personalities. As you do so, several types of players will surface. Listen closely to their comments and thoughts. The way they speak and address the situation at hand will give you great insight into the type of team members they'll become.

As each team member reacts to your plan, balance their reactions against the information you've gathered about their backgrounds. Notice where their passions lie. You may find that one person is an expert in the subject matter while another is a talented organizer. Pinpoint the type of task that resonates most with each person so that everyone will lead their portion of the project with excitement.

As you determine the place for each of the players, speak to the expertise of the individuals so they feel you're speaking directly to them. For instance, when you talk about technical elements, look directly to your technician. Do the same for every team member, reinforcing each one's special talent and team position. If someone questions every action you take, let that person know that you appreciate being kept on your toes. All team members must know that you value them and the services they provide.

Unify team members by finding a common thread or by creating one that they can commit to. Once you've identified the types of team members you're managing, you'll want to present the project and the individual tasks in a format that speaks to the specific skill sets of the members.

Create unity by making it clear that they're all essential members of your team. Help them understand that they're working for the common good of the team and the organization, and let them know that their relationship to each other is vital for success. If they can understand how they fit into the big picture — and how the project fits into

> "Speak to the specific skill set of each team member."

> "This background information is essential."

the big picture of the organization — they'll feel like part of the solution.

Empower the team to execute the plan with dedication and passion. Make the path ahead clear. Help team members understand the stages of development as your project progresses. Give them feedback as you move along the way, and be ready to step in and assist with mediation if conflict or hostility begins. Always keep an open line of communication with all team members to minimize the risk of competition for control. By helping the team visualize the direction they're heading, you'll keep them on the path toward executing your plan and reaching your goals.

Joe Curcillo (themindshark.com) is a speaker, entertainer, lawyer, and communications expert. As an adjunct professor at Widener University School of Law, he developed a hands-on course based on the use of storytelling as a persuasive weapon. He has been a professional entertainer helping organizations improve their communication techniques since 1979.

Know Your Team Inside & Out

For more on connecting with team members, see articles such as these at NonprofitWorld.org:

- **The Five Biggest Teamwork Ills & How to Avoid Them** (Vol. 40, No. 2)
- **Be a Better Leader by Being a Careful Listener** (Vol. 37, No. 1)
- **Well Suited: A Practical Approach to Understanding Personalities** (Vol. 40, No. 1)
- **Why Feedback Is the Key to Your Success** (Vol. 35, No. 3)
- **Assess Your Work Style for Better Communication** (Vol. 37, No. 4)
- **What Makes a Great Team?** (Vol. 32, No. 6)
- **Increase Work-Group Productivity with Concrescent Conversation** (Vol. 26, No. 3)
- **Eight Steps to Managing Conflict** (Vol. 20, No. 4)
- **What Kind of Team Leader Are You?** (Vol. 32, No. 5)
- **Seven Kinds of Listeners & How to Approach Them** (Vol. 39, No. 2)

Tips to Unlock Opportunity on TikTok

TikTok may connect you with followers you wouldn't otherwise reach, helping you raise funds and awareness.

By Tiffany Rivers

TikTok is now among the fastest growing social-media platforms, particularly popular among Gen Zers. While its primary purpose may be entertainment, more and more nonprofits are turning to TikTok to inform, educate, engage, advocate, and actually raise funds – as well as drive traffic to their websites.

Consider the case of It Gets Better (itgetsbetter.org), a nonprofit organization with a mission to uplift, empower, and connect lesbian, gay, transgender, and queer youth around the globe. It Gets Better launched their #FavoriteTeacher campaign on TikTok to give users the opportunity to acknowledge the important role of educators in the lives of teens and to show how important it is for LBGTQ+ youth to have supportive adults in their schools. The campaign ran on TikTok's Discover page for 24 hours and TikTok ads were launched simultaneously.

> "The Discover page is the hub for the most popular content."

Within the first few weeks, It Gets Better saw a 41% increase in follower growth week over week (compared with 8% growth for the previous weeks) and a 500% increase in site traffic. Views of #FavoriteTeacher generated 104 million views in just four days.

While these results are impressive, it's important for nonprofits to consider several tips before diving into the world of TikTok, including:

Decide if TikTok is right for your nonprofit. Building a presence on a new social-media platform can be a huge undertaking. Before stepping in, first assess if TikTok is effective in reaching your target audience. Remember: approximately 62% of TikTok's audience is between the ages of 10 and 29, according to Comscore.

It's also helpful to know what trends are circulating on TikTok and to see if you can attach yourself to them. These trends are constantly changing, and the best way to know

> "Expensive equipment and cameras aren't necessary."

which content, audio, hashtags, or concepts are going viral on the platform is to engage with the Discover page. Think of this page as the hub for the most popular content on the app.

Engage the right talent. TikTok prioritizes raw, real, unedited and people-first videos. Overly polished photos, videos, and graphics won't cut it. Think about whether you have employees willing and able to make engaging videos – or the budget to hire creators and influencers.

Having an employee kick off your TikTok account is a great starting point, but it's not the only way. TikTok's creator marketplace is the platform's official collaboration center that connects organizations with creators to execute paid and reward-based campaigns. This is a great starting point for nonprofits that are new to TikTok.

Keep content "entertainment-first." Remember that TikTok is an entertainment platform first and foremost. Make sure you're reserving the right content for the right channels.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) is a great example: They use Facebook to share tips and articles about dog care to establish their place as an expert in dog welfare. On TikTok, however, AKC has a different goal: to engage audiences with cute dog videos. It's critical to approach TikTok like a regular human, not a formalized brand, and remember that expensive equipment and cameras aren't necessary to produce highly engaging content.

Keep it concise. It's crucial that you get to the point. More than one in three viral videos features a person speaking within the first three seconds, according to a recent analysis of over 600 viral TikTok videos by Semrush (semrush.com).

Show your followers the lesson or purpose of the video within the first three seconds: That's all the time you get before the average user swipes. You can easily achieve a captivating introduction by using narration or text on the screen or by front-loading the video with the most salient information.

Videos should have a story arc – a concise beginning, middle, and end. Consider mapping out key story fundamentals such as a hook, introduction, interesting turn, and final pay-off before executing a TikTok.

Inspire audience engagement. When crafting a content strategy, you don't need to start from scratch. Leverage in-app tools to promote conversation and engagement with existing audiences that overlap with your own: This can be through TikTok's duet, react, reply-with-video, and stitch features. Inspire your audience to have a dialogue with your organization through the use of polls or Q&As. Also, community management is key on TikTok, so be sure to answer any questions you receive in your comments (or in the comment section of other viral TikToks).

Ultimately TikTok is here to stay and provides an opportunity for nonprofits to connect with an audience they might otherwise not reach. Once you've determined if TikTok is a good fit for your organization, remember that content should be entertainment-focused, concise, attention-grabbing, engaging, and should tell a good story. Compelling TikTok content can help you build brand awareness and support on the platform while helping drive traffic to other platforms and fueling donations.

Tiffany Rivers is senior director, social media, Media Cause (mediacause.com). Media Cause's Patricia Camerota (social media strategist) and Janine Guarino (associate social director) also contributed to this article. Media Cause is a mission-driven marketing agency focused on helping nonprofit organizations grow and accelerate their missions.

> "The campaign generated 104 million views in just four days."

In Greater Detail

For more tips on using TikTok and other social media, take a quick look at these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

How to Make Social-Media Fundraising Work for You (Vol. 27, No. 2)

The Best Way to Tell Your Organization's Story? Capture It on Video (Vol. 35, No. 4)

Using Social Media to Advance Your Goals (Vol. 27, No. 1)

Get to the Point Fast (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Accelerating Fundraising through Social Media (Vol. 28, No. 3)

How to Engage the Next Generation of Donors Now (Vol. 20, No. 1)

Yes, You CAN Make Powerful, Affordable Videos (Vol. 14, No. 2)

Don't Take Risks with Social Media (Vol. 29, No. 1)

How to Get the Community to Support Your Nonprofit

Don't let your organization be your community's "best-kept secret." Be sure community members take notice and offer support.

By Joanne Oppelt

If you want to recruit more volunteers, donors, good board members, motivated staff, and advocates for your cause, you need the community to get excited about supporting your organization. Get started by following these guideposts.

Gain the Visibility You Need

Nonprofits usually seek visibility by issuing press releases, posting on social media, speaking at events, holding fundraising activities, and being listed in resource and membership directories. The goal is often to do as many of these activities as possible. After all, the reasoning goes, the more people who hear about the organization's good work, the more they'll support it. Rarely does it work that way.

Organizations do need to initiate a fair amount of their own publicity – but not in the way they generally do it. Trying to speak to everyone assumes that a broad audience is interested in your nonprofit and that once they hear about your organization, they'll be so bowled over they'll support you. Most of the time, those assumptions aren't true.

When you target the whole community, you pour resources into sending a message to many that resonates with only a few. To get better results, consider tweaking what you're already doing: Just be more strategic in the ways you go about it and speak to the specific groups you're trying to reach.

Focus on Them, Not You

Donors want to have a positive impact on issues they care about. But nonprofits often fail to tell them how to do that. Instead, they ask people to give money, attend events, or apply for jobs. A nonprofit organization needs all these things to happen in order to survive. Not so for a community member.

To get their attention, focus on them. Talk to them about meeting *their* needs and *their* goals. It's not your accomplishments that excite people. They want to know how

they can participate in meeting your mission and making a difference in the world.

Talk about your mission in action, not how great your organization is. For example, consider which of these two statements has more impact:

> "Last year, our organization fed 12,000 people."
>
> "Last year, you helped 12,000 hungry people eat healthy meals, reducing the need to steal, helping stave off malnutrition, and decreasing the costs to our law enforcement and healthcare systems."

Which do you think would garner more donations?

Appeal to Smaller, Defined Groups

Attracting donors takes time and effort. You don't want to spend money looking for just anyone to support you. You want your efforts to attract as many new donors as possible.

So, instead of going after everyone, target smaller, distinct donor groups. As an example, say you want to fish for flounder. You could go out with a boat, cast a wide net, and get a lot of fish, a few of which are flounder. Or, you could go where flounders tend to congregate and cast a small net. You'll get fewer fish but a lot of them will be flounder. You won't end up with as many individual fish, but you'll get a whole lot more of what you want.

Where can you find your "flounders" – those people interested in supporting you? Start by asking these questions:

Who are your nonprofit's most ardent supporters? What are their characteristics? What do they read? What groups are they part of? How do they communicate with one another? How do they spend their leisure time? What do they spend their money on? What's important to them? What are their values?

The answers will tell you where to find people to target with your fundraising messages. You need to know these people inside and out.

Define Your Target Markets

Remember the old adage, "different strokes for different folks"? Well, it holds true in fundraising and marketing. The more defined your target group, the easier it is to speak directly to them and allocate resources to have the biggest effect.

Clients, board members, donors, staff, volunteers, advocates, and community leaders are the most critical constituencies

"Show people how your mission benefits them."

"Hear what they say, not what you want them to say."

for your nonprofit to reach. Each of these groups plays a vital role in advancing your mission. Yet, each of these groups has its own set of demographic characteristics, likes, dislikes, values, places they hang out, and preferred methods of communication. Thus, each group needs its own outreach strategy.

To target potential donors, look for people who are interested in your cause and have the means to give financially. If you're trying to realize revenue as soon as possible, target people who care about your mission and have the capacity to make large gifts. If you can wait for a big donation, go after high-net-worth donors who don't yet have affinity for your mission but could if you spent time and resources educating them. Know, though, that you will need a big hook to interest them. For example, you might hold a lavish social event, but do so knowing that your primary goal isn't to raise money from the event but, rather, to start a relationship with wealthy individuals. You can follow up with them after the event and develop their interest in your mission.

The best way to get more community support is for your message to come from the community itself. Think of it like aiming at a target. Aim for the bullseye – your core group of supporters. They can reach out to the next ring, and those people can carry your message to the ring after that, and so on.

Start from where you are with what you have. From there, branch out, and grow your base.

Do Your Research

To find out about your potential donors, research them:

To learn the group values, beliefs, and preferences of individual donors, you might visit the Center for Generational Kinetics and analyze its research. Or you might start a conversation and interact with the people you want to reach, then write down your observations. You could also conduct a survey or convene a focus group.

To learn about prospective foundation donors, study their IRS Form 990s and giving trends. Visit their websites. Study their application guidelines. Read their reports, white papers, and press releases. It's all public information.

You can study potential corporate donors by reviewing information on their website and in their corporate reports and company press releases. You might also want to become more proficient in understanding their issues and speaking their language by reading business journals and economic reports.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

If you're researching potential government funders, visit their websites to see what they do and what they fund. Read the results of any community studies they've conducted. You also have legislation, rules, and regulations ad nauseam you can read.

When you get information about your donor groups, hear what they say, not what you want them to say. Listen to them. Find a way to loop back with them and confirm your perceptions. Take the evidence you end up with and use it to fashion your approach and subsequent communications to them. To get those communications just right, base your efforts on the objective data they've provided.

Outline the Benefits for Each Target Group

A value proposition – a statement of the benefits someone will receive by being involved with your organization – helps people see how your mission benefits them and why they might want to support you within their sea of options. A well-written value proposition will explain how your organization solves community problems and improves the lives of your clients and the donor as well. It will be specific. It will tell your supporters why your nonprofit is worthy of their backing.

All the value propositions will be related yet different. You'll want to use the language from each constituency group for best results.

You can use value propositions in countless ways. Some examples:

- **Use a value proposition for press releases,** social-media posts, and other general communications.
- **Put a value proposition** on your website.
- **Include value propositions aimed at donors** in your case for support and the materials you create from it – for example, brochures, donation pages, annual appeals, corporate giving campaigns, grant narratives, and other fundraising items.
- **Place specific value propositions on individual web pages** and in your outreach, recruitment, and retention materials to gain more clients, employees, volunteers, and board members

Your goal is to give your target groups opportunities to interact with your organization so that they'll become excited about your message. Once they understand the value you offer, they'll be eager to spread the message to their networks.

> "Each group needs its own outreach strategy."

Watch Your Support & Funding Grow

People who are passionate about your cause will likely give you more than money. They'll give you a good word when talking to their friends and family. They'll provide volunteer time and in-kind donations so that your costs are reduced.

It's all about your target groups' needs, values, and preferences. Define the specific groups you want to reach. Research them. Design your fundraising campaigns around what you've learned. And watch the money roll in.

Joanne Oppelt, MHA (joanneoppeltcourses.com, joanne@joanneoppelt.com) provides nonprofits with consulting services, online courses with private coaching, person-to-person fundraising advice, annual summits, virtual get-togethers, and weekly newsletters. Joanne is the author of six books and coauthor of 14.

Get the Right Message to the Right People

Target your communications to the groups you want to reach, using the strategies in these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

How to Keep Your Customers Happy: Market Research Is Key (Vol. 14, No. 4)

Boosting Visibility (Vol. 27, No. 2)

Grounded Visioning: A Quick Way to Create Shared Visions (Vol. 26, No. 4)

Quick & Dirty Research (Vol. 19, No. 3)

Empower Your Employees to Be Mini-Marketers (Vol. 25, No. 6)

Surveys Provide Crucial Feedback (Vol. 22, No. 5)

Using Multi-Generational Marketing to Target Donors (Vol. 23, No. 5)

Increase Your Organization's Influence in Just 15 Minutes a Month (Vol. 38, No. 1)

What's the Trick to Writing E-Mail Fundraising Letters? (Vol. Vol. 34, No. 4)

For Long-Term Stability, Look to Corporations (Vol. 32, No. 4)

Your Mission Statement Has a Mission (Vol. 19, No. 5)

Relationship Marketing: Guaranteeing the Future (Vol. 14, No. 5)

How to Conduct Focus Groups (Vol. 17, No. 5)

Two Keys to Successful Grant Proposals (Vol. 15, No. 3)

Using E-Mail & the Web to Acquire & Cultivate Donors (Vol. 21, No. 1)

Think Out of the Box for Fundraising Gains (Vol. 29, No. 5)

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Why You Should Send Your Workers "Back to School"

Learning shouldn't stop when someone earns a diploma or degree, and that's especially true in the workplace where the organization's fate could rest on the constant thirst to learn and improve.

"Developing a culture of continued education and continuous improvement is critical" if you want to retain and engage your staff, says Shawn Burcham (shawnburcham.com), founder and CEO of PFSbrands and author of *Keeping Score with GRITT: Straight Talk Strategies for Success.*

Sending employees "back to school" doesn't mean you need to enroll them in Harvard's MBA program. There's plenty that you can do within your own doors and that employees can do on their own, Burcham says.

A few examples:

Establish in-house training programs. Many organizations spend thousands of dollars to send their employees to seminars or conferences, Burcham says. "This strategy is fine, but personal growth starts by training in the workplace." One example at PFSbrands, he says, was the creation of a Financial Literacy Committee that worked to make sure employees were educated about the financial aspects of the organization, helping them understand income statements and balance sheets. "This makes everyone more aware of the challenges involved" with meeting the budget. Furthermore, this education provides everyone an opportunity to see how they can impact the organization's budget and future.

> "Personal growth starts by training in the workplace."

Encourage everyone to read books for personal development. "One of my biggest regrets and mistakes in life is that I didn't start reading books until age 40," Burcham says. Now, he has created a book club to encourage and incentivize everyone to continue to grow and learn, and he requires the senior-leadership team to read a minimum of 12 books a year. "I've seen dozens of people improve their lives as a result of implementing our book club," he says.

Target lifelong learners in recruiting efforts. You can encourage employees to develop a continuous-improvement mindset, but it's also possible to find people with that mindset in the hiring process. "We've found that lifelong learners are a great fit at PFSbrands, so we've developed systems and processes that help us recruit these types of individuals," Burcham says. Employees who don't make an effort to continuously learn and improve will ultimately find themselves at another organization. "We train our leaders to have critical conversations with individuals who aren't working toward improvement.

"Despite how many degrees hang on the walls in their offices, wise leaders are committed to never stop learning," Burcham says. "Whether it's done in-house or at an industry conference, you owe it to yourself and your employees to engage in continued education. After all, a successful organization's growth depends on the capabilities of its employees."

Nudging Better Decisions

People are constantly making bad decisions, and they persist in doing so even when they regret their choices. For example, they buy the large pizza instead of the salad and are sorry even before they finish eating it. Yet even then, it's likely that they'll make the same poor choice again later.

In *The Knowledge Illusion* (penguin.com/publishers/riverhead), Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach explain how to help people choose better options. Rather than try to change people, they say, you'll get better results if you change the environment to "nudge" them toward the right choice. You might, for example, put some attractive salads at the beginning of a cafeteria line and the pizzas at the end so people are more likely to choose a nutritious salad than a calorie-laden pizza.

Here are some ways you can use this strategy to help people make the best decisions:

Reduce complexity. Because so much of our knowledge is possessed by the community and not by us individually, we need to radically scale back our expectations of how much complexity people can tolerate. That means using simple language, reducing jargon, and repeating important information over and over. The more complex the topic, the more care you must take to use short sentences and short words, and the more different ways you need to explain the same thing.

Create rules. To help people choose wisely, reduce the decision to a simple rule, and then clearly explain why the rule is a good one.

Provide just-in-time education. Give people information just before they use it. When you train people, for example, be sure they have a chance to use their new knowledge while it's still fresh.

Check people's understanding. Everyone has gaps in their knowledge, though they may not realize it. Before you ask someone to make an important decision, ask them some questions to assure that they understand the situation completely.

Does Where You Bank Matter?

It's a longstanding nonprofit practice to screen financial institutions to be sure their practices don't conflict with the organization's mission. This includes being selective in where a nonprofit does its banking.

Where We Bank Matters: A Community Bank Guide for Nonprofits, a whitepaper published by Leap Ambassadors Community (leapambassadors.org), provides questions to ask when you're choosing a bank for your organization. These include:

What's the bank's commitment to your mission? Before deciding on a bank, review its website. Find out what services it offers to nonprofits (loans, grants, and other tools), what services it offers to the community you serve, and whether bank employees volunteer with nonprofits. Then, if the results are promising, meet with a bank representative. Let that person know that you want to build a relationship with a bank that serves the people your organization also serves. You want to find someone who is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about maintaining such a relationship over the long term.

Is the bank committed to the local community? Does it make loans and investments in neighborhoods that most need it,

> "First, review the bank's website."

helping lift up generations? How much credit is it issuing to the population you serve?

Does the bank have an explicit and active commitment to racial equity? How many people of color are serving on the bank's board of directors? Does the bank have representation from the entire service area? Is it making statements about racial equity, making relevant commitments, and tracking those commitments? What else are they doing in the racial equity space?

You increase your organization's credibility by banking at institutions that support your mission, values, and the people you serve. Aligning your money – no matter how much or how little – with your aspirations puts your money where your mouth is.

– reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Survive Your Office Outing

Office outings have a purpose – to raise morale, help employees blow off steam, or foster team-building. But that doesn't mean they're always enjoyable. If you're not one for the "forced fun" of a work social event, try these tactics:

Find a way to participate. Don't spend the whole time calculating when you can politely leave. Join in. For example, if you don't want to actively participate in a game, cheer on your teammates or take photos instead.

Focus on connecting. Treat the outing as an exercise in learning about your colleagues. Ask questions that draw people out. You're likely to uncover information that will help you work better with your co-workers.

Keep yourself in check. If there's alcohol being served and you choose to partake, be disciplined. People will take notice if you start acting goofy or making impolite comments.

– adapted from the *HBR Guide to Office Politics* (hbr.org)

A New Model for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

A research report in *MIT Sloan Management Review* (sloanreview.mit.edu) introduces a model for developing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in an organization. The report describes the values/principles model (or VPM), a structured and measurable framework for transforming the workplace. The report, "How a Values-Based Approach Advances DEI," explains how to change your organization's habits and increase employee satisfaction by focusing on four values:

Representation is rooted in the idea that diversity is an asset. When people are recognized for their individuality and unique voices, experiences become richer and more profoundly human. Representation encourages all to learn about and from people who are unlike themselves.

Participation is a deeper engagement and creates an environment in which everyone feels free to share knowledge and make contributions.

Application is the process of redesigning entrenched systems or processes that have favored some types of people over others – whether because of their race, gender, social skills, self-expression, or other characteristics – and whether consciously or not.

Appreciation is recognizing the value DEI brings, being grateful for it, and relying on it to make an organization successful. Rewards should be redesigned to reflect connectedness among people and their work groups, thus highlighting inclusion.

Think about these values as what your organization may become. To achieve this, begin by prioritizing the following practices:

Build a moral case for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Embed it into your mission.

Encourage willful interrogation. Ask: Why are we doing things this way? Are there better, fairer ways? What is possible?

Develop new mental models. Use cross-training and job rotation to provide greater access, improve opportunities, and overcome biases.

Expand the boundary. Look beyond the organization for knowledge, know-how, and best practices. Share experiences and insights with other leaders. Contribute to and draw knowledge from professional associations, working groups, and other outside sources.

DEI isn't something to be delegated to a subcommittee or achieved by adding a photo to a website. It's an organization-wide effort that can become the foundation for fresh ideas, new possibilities, and innovative transformation.

Leading the Small Nonprofit

Most executive directors of small nonprofit organizations enter the job with little preparation. And it's no easy job: They must continually blend managerial, operational, and leadership functions. *The Little Book of Nonprofit Leadership: An Executive Director's Handbook for Small (and Very Small) Nonprofits* (Side x Side Publishing, overdrive.com) is a handy guide to carrying out those functions.

Two-thirds of U.S. nonprofits have annual budgets of less than $500,000. Despite their small budgets, they play a critical role in the sector and society. These important organizations don't get a proportionate share of attention about how to operate. This book is a great help in filling that gap.

The book will be useful not only for executives but also for volunteers, supporters, and board members, many of whom, like the executive director, may have little experience in working with the nuances of small organizations. It will help them all understand the responsibilities and challenges of leading, managing, and operating small nonprofits. And, while the book is an excellent resource for every small – and very small – organization, much of the advice will be useful for seasoned execs as well. Many nonprofit leaders would do well to review some of the basics covered here.

– reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Workers Find It Almost Impossible to Unplug

Contacting employees after working hours is prohibited in some countries, such as Portugal and Belgium. In contrast, nearly 70% of U.S. working professionals use mobiles for work during their downtime. When a new study asked people if they used mobile devices for work-related purposes while on vacation (http://passport-photo.online/blog/smartphone-use-on-vacation-study/), about seven out of 10 Americans (68%) said yes. Here's a generational breakdown of those who say they work during vacation:

- Gen Zers (25 or younger): 78%
- Millennials (26–38): 71%
- Gen Xers (39–54): 66%
- Baby Boomers (55 or older): 48%

As you can tell, even when employees are on vacation, it doesn't mean they stop working – and that's particularly true for Gen Zers and Millennials. Other findings:

- Roughly 68% of travelers use mobile devices for work during their downtime, and 62% admit that it makes them unable to relax.
- Six out of 10 Americans say using a smartphone for work-related purposes caused them to change their vacation schedule.
- When asked if they wish they'd been unreachable from work during their most recent holiday, 66% said yes. Sadly, 60% said they're expected to respond to work e-mails and messages on vacation.

Max Woolf, who blogged about this research, emphasizes that "it's not okay to continually bother workers on vacation. Otherwise, you'll be contributing to the always-on culture where people can't take a full break from phones, which might ultimately lead to resentment or even burnout."

You're Not Immune to the Illusory Truth Effect – A Cognitive Shortcut that Clouds Decision-Making

Leaders today contend with incorrect and unreliable information at unparalleled scale.

According to research released in the *MIT Sloan Management Review* (mit.edu), false information, if repeated often enough, can result in an illusion of truth. This *illusory truth effect* places executive decision-making at risk. While many executives believe themselves immune, research says otherwise.

In the world of decision-making, the proliferation of false data is dangerous. Misinformation, regardless of whether it was mistakenly passed along or shared with ill intent, is a common occurrence in this digital age, and leaders can find themselves on the receiving end if they're not cautious.

"The illusory truth effect occurs effortlessly, but effort is necessary to combat it," notes Jonas De keersmaecker (esade.edu). "While its negative effects can never be fully avoided, its influence can be limited through diligence and a focus on accuracy."

> "Respond with facts and repetition, repetition, repetition."

The researchers outline strategies for organizations to combat the illusory truth effect:

Avoid the bias blind spot: Understand the illusory truth effect and accept that leaders are as vulnerable to it as anyone else.

Avoid epistemic bubbles: Foster an environment in which opposing and differing perspectives can be generated and where they are openly discussed.

Question facts and assumptions: Develop an accuracy mindset with an emphasis on evaluating whether information fits one's knowledge. Promote a culture where the default is to consider the truthfulness of new information when it arises. Foster external fact-checking to ensure that information used in decision-making has been verified.

Repeat the truth: Keep repeating true and relevant information. Prepare to respond with facts and repetition, repetition, repetition.

Why to Stop Interviewing Job Candidates

Professor Allen Huffcutt, who has researched the job interview for over 20 years, notes that most of us interview job applicants in an unstructured way – as if we're getting to know someone on a first date. A long history of research confirms that there's little correlation between the unstructured job interview and job performance.

As Ori Brafman and Rom Brafman tell us in *Sway* (doubleday.com), questions asked in the standard job interview – "What do you see yourself doing five years from now? What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses? Why did you leave your last job?" – give no useful information about what the candidate would be like on the job.

The authors explain: "The reason managers can err so easily is that, in addition to ignoring objective data, they focus on and give too much credence to irrelevant factors," such as what Hoffman dubs the "mirror, mirror" effect, in which we "base the image of the ideal candidate on ourselves" and want to hire the person with whom we click. But there's compelling evidence that we're better off hiring someone unlike ourselves.

If you do use interviews, make sure they're structured – not unstructured – interviews, in which all interviewers ask the same questions of the candidate. Focus your questions on job-related hypothetical scenarios and just-the-facts questions such as "What software are you familiar with?" and "What fundraising experience have you had?" Analysis shows that just-the-facts interviews are six times more effective than first-date interviews at predicting a person's job performance.

But even the best interviews aren't that predictive, say *Sway*'s authors, because some people are better than others at selling themselves. Rather than interviews, it's more helpful to give people aptitude tests, mental ability tests, and work samples (where you let candidates perform a small piece of the work they'll be doing in the job).

Nonprofits Among the Most Breached, Study Shows

The nonprofit sector is one of the most breached of all industries, reveals the latest NordPass research (nordpass.com). While there are various reasons behind these data breaches, poor password hygiene is spelled out as one of the weakest links. Top professionals still create weak passwords, with "123456" the most popular (and easily breached).This greatly increases the risks of cyberattacks.

People can avoid many data breaches by following simple steps to improve password security. NordPass provides these tips to ensure your organization's passwords are safe:

Deploy a password manager. Password managers allow you to store all the passwords in end-to-end encrypted digital storage locked with a single keyword for the most convenience. Most password managers have additional features to check passwords' strength and automatically generate unique passwords. For organizations, they can come in handy when sharing passwords with employees or managing their access.

Introduce cybersecurity training. Since simple human mistakes remain the leading cause of data breaches, it's worth investing in cybersecurity training sessions for employees. Starting from the basics might be a good idea given that people have different technology background levels.

Enable multi-factor authentication. Known as MFA, it serves as an extra layer of security. It's an authentication method that uses two or more mechanisms to validate the user's identity – these can be separate apps, security keys, devices, or biometric data.

> "Simple human mistakes remain the leading cause of data breaches."

Make Patience a Prerequisite

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's the art of patience. Most of us have had to rethink the "let's-get-it-done-now" attitude that has made our organizations successful in the past.

"When you're hard-wired to get things done now and never put off until tomorrow what you can wrap up today, it's hard to be patient!" says Melanie Herman (melanie@nonprofitrisk.org), executive director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She describes how putting a "pause" on some of their programs to deal with the COVID crisis added valuable perspectives and drove home the importance of being prepared for unexpected, disruptive events.

To infuse patience into your own organization, she suggests creating a list of questions you can pose when things seem chaotic. Here are a few of her favorites:

Do I really need to do this *today?*

What are the pros of hitting pause? Would the result be better if I paused and returned to finish later?

Whose perspective is missing but attainable if I'm patient?

Must we sprint or should we conserve energy for a marathon?

Is there an opportunity to learn more and think differently about this issue if I'm patient? Could patience free up time to rethink the pathway to resolution?

Are we approaching this work with humility, acknowledging that we don't have all the answers?

What assumptions have I made? Why do I think those assumptions are correct? What might happen if I'm wrong?

A Message of Hope for Troubled Times

David Dye has written books on leadership, a children's book, and many blog posts and articles that have been published in *Nonprofit World.* His new book, *Tomorrow Together* (letsgrowleaders.com) is different, although it touches on many of the same themes as his others. It's a book of essays, a book of humanity, healing, and community.

He notes Pema Chodron's statement that being human is a combination of "wretchedness and gloriousness," that those two states of being "need each other," but that it's easy "to get caught up in one and resist or yearn for the other." That resisting or yearning is a form of naive hope, Dye says. "But wisdom grows as we understand that we live with both aspects – as individuals and collectively."

He doesn't shy away from the divisiveness and struggle that plague our times. But he believes that, together, we can work through our challenges. We need to find new ways of thinking, along with patience, attentiveness, and flexibility. We also need to feel the full range of our emotions, the sadness and anger as well as the joy and awe.

Dye captures all of that in his slim, beautiful book of essays. The message is that we need to feel it all, be mindful of every bit of it, and then come together, with hope, to create a better future.

Beyond the Briefs

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

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

To Be an Ingenious Leader, Take Charge of Your Learning (Vol. 37, No. 3)

Bring Your Training Home (Vol. 37, No. 4)

Risk & Your Brain: Taking Smart Risks & Making the Best Decisions (Vol. 38, No. 4)

Nine Surefire Steps to Lock Down Your Cybersecurity (Vol. 36, No. 3)

Are You Risking Legal Action because of Discrimination? Study Shines Light on Leadership Diversity (Vol. 38, No. 4)

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

To Make an Impact, Improve Your Non-Verbal Skills (Vol. 38, No. 3)

How Jargon Undermines Communication (Vol. 27, No. 2)

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)