



# Are You Ready to Go Global?

Read this book first.

By Jean Hardy Robinson

## Going Global for the Greater Good: Succeeding as a Nonprofit in the International Community

By Bonnie L. Koenig. 141 pages. Hardcover. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

Bonnie Koenig's fine book will fill a need for nonprofits that are already "going global" as well as those that think they should. Interweaving a discussion of "why" with many tips for "how," Koenig has written a case for more thoughtful expansion across borders by organizations whose missions will benefit from this geographic growth.

Answers to the question of "why" to go global often grow out of strategic planning. Koenig emphasizes the enrichment that global perspectives bring to programming. Organizations often find solutions to persistent problems when they look beyond their borders for creative ideas, new collaborators, and successful models.

The book is also rich in "how not to's." Examples include making such culturally insensitive choices as using a toll-free number that's good only in the USA or requiring payment for conference fees in US dollars without offering an alternative.

Language is a huge issue. Even if international organizations decide to operate in English, they must constantly evaluate who is being excluded as a result. Koenig suggests one easy accommodation at a conference: Identify members who speak languages other than English by a name tag notation such as "Je parle francais."

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The financial resources necessary to develop global alliances or friendships are an important consideration. For example, if an organization pays transportation costs for board members, can it cover the expense of international travel? If teleconferences will be substituted for face-to-face committee meetings, can the organization identify costs and resources to add that technology? What can be budgeted as "seed funding" for international expansion? As Koenig demonstrates, it is naïve to assume that a nonprofit already stretched thin can successfully add an international dimension without added resources.

In issues such as recruiting international members, board members, or staff members, Koenig wisely advises that an incremental approach is best. Often Americans assume that relationships can lead to meaningful collaboration within a short timeframe. Colleagues in other parts of the world may expect a longer period of building trust before making commitments.

Most organizations going international confront operational issues before they face the need to re-examine governance models. In membership organizations, however, both issues must be addressed promptly. Will expansion result in new chapters in foreign countries, affiliates with

autonomy to develop materials that "fit" the local culture, or strategic alliances that recognize common objectives but preserve distinctions? If there is a dues structure, then "equal" services must be provided if comparable dues are expected.

Koenig devotes a chapter to "Communicating Your Messages Effectively" because she recognizes the importance of sensitive and effective communication across borders of all kinds. She provides useful checklists and guidelines that should be widely appreciated.

Finally, Koenig's models illustrate just how diverse the path to globalization can be. She provides examples representing a trend toward decentralization by country or region, with a solid core based on mission.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of going international is that changing world conditions magnify the already daunting pace of environmental change in any single country. New technologies constantly need updating. Trends that seem clear may not come to pass. Nevertheless, Koenig believes in the value of accepting complexity "for the greater good." Let's hope that many nonprofit leaders will read her book and be convinced that the potential rewards of going global outweigh the challenges. ■

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